The Coming of the Lord

By SARAH GERTRUDE MILLIN

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The reader of "God's Stepchildren," "Mary Glenn" and "The Jordans" must be impressed with their author's uncannily sympathetic knowledge of South Africa. Truly you will say this woman must have lived her Africa, or she could never have written of it so convincingly. She has lived in South Africa all her life, partly in Kimberly, more lately, since her marriage, in Johannesburg.

Mrs. Millin was only nineteen when her first short story was published. Since then she has been a regular contributor to the magazines and has written five or six novels. She writes with a careful art and with the sincerity of a rich and sympathetic mind.

The Coming of the Lord

by Sarah Gertrude Millin

Author of "God's Stepchildren," "Mary Glenn," etc.

AGAIN, as in "God's Stepchildren," the scene is South Africa, and again we have the grim unequal struggle between the blacks and whites. But it is a story about men, not races.

Arnold Duerden, back in the little South African village after the Armistice of 1918, finds his life rather flat and headed toward failure. Then fate hands him his opportunity. A little band of religious fanatics, dark-skinned Kaffirs, under the leadership of Aaron, the Evangelist, camps on the heights above the town, waiting for the Coming of the Lord. Only in a mob atmosphere, where physical courage wins at the expense of subtler virtues can a man like Duerden salvage his wounded vanity. So he organizes the Vigilants, to drive Aaron's black band away from town, and finally precipitates the hatred and bloodshed of its tremendously dramatic climax.

"Here is a masterly novel, full of beauty and poetry and instinct with emotional fervor."

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SARAH GERTRUDE MILLIN

author of

"GOD'S STEPCHILDREN"

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THE COMING OF THE LORD

CHAPTER I

I

As it was Saturday, Isaac Nathan, the old Jew who, for thirty years now, had kept shop in President Street, Gibeon, in the Transvaal, put up his shutters at one o'clock. In those thirty years Gibeon, which always spoke of itself as a progressive community, had increased its white population to two thousand six hundred people. In another thirty years it might—who could tell—double that population. It would then enter a higher statistical grade. It would then rise from the fourth to the third grade of South African towns—numbering, in this year of 1928, nine—which had over five thousand and less than ten thousand European inhabitants.

Perhaps the old Voortrekker Boer, Joshua van Deventer, who had founded Gibeon, would have considered that quite a splendid result. After all, in his time, in the eighteen-fifties, figures had a different meaning. One might then have bought African territory the size of Holland for a few thousand pounds or a hundred head of breeding cattle. In fact, one did so.

It was old Joshua van Deventer who had given the place the name of Gibeon. It had happened that, one day, as he and his party were trekking away from association with England, they had outspanned in a spot where there was water, and the earth was richly black, and the hills were kindly protective. And as the oxen went here and there among the high grass and the coffee was being made in the shadow of the white-tilted wagons, some wandering natives approached them. They were of the weak Batlapin tribe that had been saved from the frightfulness of the Matabele through the intervention of a missionary, and they were Christians, and they were tame under the hand of the white man.

And they approached the terrified little group of whites, and they miraculously said: "We are the servants of the white lords."

Joshua van Deventer knew his Old Testament. He stood like a prophet before his people. "It is the finger of God!" he declaimed then, in his slow, solemn voice. "See. I asked these men, 'Who are ye, and from whence come ye?' and they answered me in the words of the Book: 'From a far country thy servants are come because of the name of the Lord thy God, for we have heard the fame of him and all that he did in Egypt.' "

It was something of an embellishment, but the old man's listeners stood mute with awe, and he continued: "Are these not the Hivites of whom the Book speaks? And shall we not then call this land whereon we now rest Gibeon?"

He thought of his significant name, and so did his Boers, and he gazed heavenwards and spoke as if the

voice of prophecy were in him: "May the sun stand still on our prosperity. May there grow on this our place of outspan 'a great city, as one of the royal cities.' "

They said amen. The air was full of portents. They began next day the building of a church. . . .

So here was Gibeon, "a great city, as one of the royal cities," and since it was the day of early closing in the Transvaal and one o'clock, Old Nathan—everyone called him Old Nathan—was putting up the shutters of his shop in President Street.

2

Old Nathan was the kind of person who, having lived long in a place, is absorbed into the pattern of it. When people spoke of Jews as being this or that kind of thing they did not mean Old Nathan. They recognised amiably that he had to close his shop on certain days because of his fasts or festivals; the Kaffirs called him "M'juta"; he was always prepared to discuss Biblical or racial matters with anyone who came into his shop; he spoke English in his own curious way; he felt himself to be something that the other inhabitants of Gibeon were not, and often told them so directly or indirectly—but there it was: he belonged, he fitted into the scheme of Gibeon, they would have been as sorry as people ever are about things that do not concern their own being if a misfortune had happened to him.

He knew it, and commented on it in his own quiet, cynical way: "The idiot of the village, too, finds his place there. A person gets used to a thing. I am here popular like the idiot of the village."

He had no part—and that chiefly explained the equa-

nimity with which he was considered—in the social life of Gibeon. From the bottom of his heart he did not want it. Although he was at any time prepared to abandon his business and talk to whoever came into his shop—Kaffirs, Dutchmen, Englishmen, children, greybeards, males, females—on any subject whatever, and on either side of any argument, he positively could not understand why one should make this affair of meeting people into an anxiety and a nuisance. Nor had he anyone to please in the matter. He had been a widower for twenty-seven years, and his only son, Saul, was studying medicine in England. . . .

So he leaned against a post of his stoep, looking meditatively up and down the street, or he sat reading on a chair behind his desk, and the matters that occupied his mind were the strange doings of people five thousand years or five thousand miles away from him.

It pleased him greatly to be a human being. He often thought how trying Jehovah must find it to have to be continually changing himself that he might remain the image of a variable mankind. On the other hand, he was not always sure that he believed in God. Was there a God? Was there not a God? How should he, Isaac Nathan, know? In any case, what did it matter? If there was a God, he was in his office, his heaven, doing his business, reckoning up his accounts, whether anyone had faith in his being or not. If there wasn't a God, then faith could not create him.

It was a serene and comforting reflection—so Old Nathan found. At the same time, he followed the customs of his forefathers because he was of Israel as they had been. It was a matter, not of logic, but of habit.

3

This afternoon he was, as usual, expecting Dr. Diethelm to come and play chess. Dr. Diethelm was his only regular visitor.

Before the European War Dr. Diethelm had had quite a large practice in Johannesburg. But during the War he had become greatly disliked because he was a German, and the fact that his son Oscar had joined the Union troops to fight the Germans in German South-west Africa had not helped: he was disliked just the same.

He had not wanted Oscar to go and fight. Oscar was the only being in the world he had ever loved. His wife and two daughters were flaxen and vapid, they bored him and he bullied them. But Oscar was, he felt, the flesh of his flesh and the bone of his bone. He had his big frame, his strong dark hair that could not hide the characteristically Teuton head, his grey eyes. He had, even at nineteen, the deep horizontal line across the top of his nose beneath the overhanging brow, the crooked forefinger, the mole in the middle of his back that his father had. He had his brains. He held his dreams. He was his very son.

But there it ended. Oscar was no German in his heart. He was nothing but a South African. He thought the thoughts and felt the feelings of the land of his birth. When he saw his friends going to war he went with them. But when they came back from German South-west Africa he remained behind under the soil that was henceforth Britain's. And two days after he was killed a crowd of men and women wrecked Dr. Diethelm's consulting-room, broke his furniture and

instruments and burnt his books, because a picture of the Kaiser hung over the fireplace and he would not take it down.

His wife died a year later. His daughters married and went away. He did not think he noticed the going of any of them. He did not think he noticed anything at all now in life. Nevertheless some movement was proceeding within him. For one day he packed his things and left Johannesburg and came to settle in Gibeon.

There he continued his work with an excluding absorption. But he made no talk with his patients on matters which did not concern the ills of their bodies. And they, for their part, called him when they needed him, but, seeing his stony eyes, made no talk with him either. He was not a popular man in Gibeon. He was not an unpopular man. He was just that particular person, Dr. Diethelm.

One day, however, having passed Old Nathan, leaning as usual against a post of his stoep, with his habitual curt greeting, he turned round, after having walked on a few steps, and came slowly back.

"I hear you play chess," he said. "H'm?"

"Yes, I play," replied Old Nathan.

"What sort of game?"

Old Nathan wrinkled his thin cheeks in a smile. He had an enormous forehead, much too high and broad for the rest of his face, large, melancholy, dark-blue eyes, a small white moustache that he clipped level with his upper lip and that hardly showed against the pallor of his skin, and a short, straight nose. His eyes were so set, his nostrils so shaped that nobody who

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knew a Jew would ever have taken him for anything but a Jew.

He shrugged his shoulders slightly. "I am too good for the people here," he declared in simple truth.

"Perhaps you will play with me," said Dr. Diethelm, with the ghost of an upward movement of his mouth. "I play not a bad game myself."

"Come on Saturday afternoon," said Old Nathan, "and we will have a match."

Since then Dr. Diethelm had appeared every Saturday afternoon, and they played, sometimes one game, sometimes two or three games. Old Nathan stood the samovar he had brought with him from Russia thirty-eight years ago on a table beside them, and every now and then he poured each of them a cup of tea. Dr. Diethelm took his tea very strong and nearly cold. Old Nathan liked it clear and yellow and very hot, and he had no milk with it and put no sugar into it. But he broke a lump of sugar in two and held a piece in his mouth to sweeten the tea as it passed on its way.

They played an almost even game, but Dr. Diethelm won more often than Old Nathan because he was more cautious. He was also more straightforward in his methods. Old Nathan would do the most subtle, the most apparently wild and inexplicable, things to achieve a triumph moves and moves ahead. He would seem to be playing innocently towards a particular purpose, he would engage Dr. Diethelm's attention in a certain direction, he would lure him on to take an important piece, and presently he would say in a tone of still, nervous triumph: "In four moves now you are mate," and disaster would arrive for Dr. Diethelm from quite an unexpected quarter.

But Dr. Diethelm had become wary. He no longer so easily succumbed to Old Nathan's strategy. He pondered a good long time before he took the knight or castle which stood too obviously in his way. He knew the simple and indifferent expression with which, almost unconsciously, Old Nathan decorated his face when he was full of malign and complex motives, and his excitement was just as much as he could bear.

So in these days, since Old Nathan gave his deepest attention to achieve, not expected, but unexpected triumphs, and was sometimes in other ways very careless, Dr. Diethelm, slow and grim and steady, won more often than Old Nathan.

And Old Nathan could not bear it. If there was one thing in which he displayed himself quite lacking in sportsmanship it was chess. He did not play physical games, but he could lose money at cards with equanimity. He could risk a year's earnings on the stock exchange, see it vanish in a day, and exhibit no emotion. He could wipe out unpaid, and never-to-be-paid book-debts with a steady hand. He could meet the lashes of Fate and never blench. But he could not—he positively could not—suffer a defeat at chess without being filled to the brim with chagrin and hatred. All the quarrels of his youth had sprung from chess. He had once—forty years ago—not spoken to a brother of his for six months because of the venom engendered by a lost game of chess. When Dr. Diethelm beat him now it was as much as he could do not to insult him bitterly. He felt, at such times, that Dr. Diethelm was an ugly, mean, untrustworthy, insufferable character, and now and then, in a sort of sideways manner

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one could take seriously or not as one wished, he indicated as much.

But Dr. Diethelm never answered him. To begin with, he could be serene in his victory, and, in any case, chess did not move him to passion. And then he understood Old Nathan. "All right, you have your revenge now," he would say to him quietly if there was time for another game. Or, if there wasn't, he would say: "I give you your revenge next week."

To which Old Nathan would make no cordial response at all, and it would really seem as though they were never going to play again. But some time during the week Old Nathan, being, after all, forty years older now than when he had quarrelled with his brother, would manage to meet Dr. Diethelm and smile at him in a shame-faced, apologetic fashion which was rather engaging, and he would say: "Well, we see who wins next Saturday," and next Saturday Dr. Diethelm would walk as usual on to the stoep of the living-room which was at the back of the shop, and he would knock at the door and open it to find, as he expected to find, the samovar steaming, and the board and chessmen ready on the little table beside the window.

4

The first time Dr. Diethelm had come to play chess Old Nathan had been called out during the course of a game. When he returned he found Dr. Diethelm standing before the photograph of his son Saul, taken in uniform ten years before. A melancholy youth, he looked, with his small, deep-set, ironic, unhappy eyes set under thick eyebrows, the left higher than the right, with his high cheek-bones and pointed chin and up-

standing dark hair—a Slav type—not at all martial.

And Saul Nathan had, indeed, never possessed a martial spirit. All his life he had hated both fighting and killing. He had never thrown a stone at a bird or a line for a fish. Once, at the age of thirteen, he had seen a flock of sheep going down the street past the shop to be slaughtered. And something in their helpless, bewildered, driven, deathward hurrying had so filled him with anguish that he had decided, as he stood there, to become a vegetarian.

He had remained a vegetarian for nine months. It had been a great nuisance in the home. The Kaffir woman who kept house for the widower and his son had been in despair. She stood in the kitchen stuffing things into tomatoes, continually beating eggs, boiling rice, potatoes, green mealies, onions. There were times when no green vegetables were to be had in Gibeon. After a few months, when Saul saw his eggs or onions coming on to the table, he felt as if he must vomit. He would put a morsel into his mouth and abandon the rest. And then he would stare hungrily and contemptuously at the food his father was eating until Old Nathan could not go on with the meal either.

At the end of the nine months Saul, thoroughly undernourished, had been compelled by medical advice and his father's insistence to eat flesh again.

He had wept furious, protesting, ashamed tears into the chicken-broth which was his first non-vegetarian food. He had immediately vomited it. But, in the end, his feelings had subsided and his stomach succumbed, and, although he even now insisted that flesh-eating was the most barbarous habit of the twentieth century and that the generations of the future would

find it not less appalling to consider than cannibalism, he had become again an eater of meat.

He was sixteen when war broke out. Now he always seized the paper first to read the war news. And at night he lay awake seeing men with their heads and arms and legs off, men in unrecognisable bits, men holding in bowels that spurted from their torn bellies, men running, men falling, men dying. When, presently, troops of soldiers began to march down the street in their new uniforms while the band played, he thought of the other soldiers he saw running across his sleepless eyeballs, and once, when he was eighteen, he said to his father: "Look at the trappings of glory—the traps they ought to call them."

He hated the word glory. It made him think of death.

Yet barely a year after this he returned one day from college at Cape Town and told his father that he was going to the war.

His father sat still. Everything was still. He passed his tongue over his lips. Saul was his only child, and he had no wife or kin in the big land.

"Well—" he said at last, and smiled a very little.

"I must go," said Saul.

"Why?" asked Old Nathan.

"Because they say that Jews—"

"I see," said Old Nathan, and looked at his hands that would not rest.

They were both convinced, he and Saul, that Saul would be killed in the war. The dramatic sense they shared pointed to such a destiny as inevitable. The only son who hated battle and yet felt impelled to go to it—he had to be killed.

But Saul had returned from France unscathed, healthy, broadened, a man—more bitter than ever against war, yet not physically damaged by it; and a few months later his father had sent him to England to become a doctor because that was the best he could think of doing for his son.

5

Dr. Diethelm turned round as Old Nathan entered the room.

"That is your son?" he said.

"Yes," answered Old Nathan, containing his swelling paternity in the single word.

"It is not an Hebraic type."

"It is the type of many Russian Jews."

"He does not resemble you."

"No, he is like his mother's uncle. His mother's uncle you would have mistaken for a Russian of Tartar ancestry. Only his eyes were grey. And so are my son's. You would not call it a good-looking face," added Old Nathan with pride.

Dr. Diethelm did not contradict him.

"How old is he there?" he asked gruffly.

"Nineteen."

"My son was killed at nineteen," said Dr. Diethelm, and in the course of years never again mentioned him or looked at the photograph of Old Nathan's son. Old Nathan, indeed, noticing that Dr. Diethelm habitually sat with his back to the photograph, removed it and kept it in his bedroom, and, in future, their manner was as if neither of them had ever had a son.

But on this Saturday there was something he could not help telling Dr. Diethelm about Saul. And after

he had achieved a stalemate, which always put him in a better humour than anything else, he said suddenly:

"Saul will be here the week after next."

Dr. Diethelm's bushy black eyebrows, that had here and there a protruding white hair, twitched. He removed the cigar from between his strong, yellowed teeth, and shook the ash from it.

"So?" he said, and raised the cigar to his mouth again.

Old Nathan decided that he would now show restraint and say not one word more about Saul. It was clear that the thought of another man's son coming home gave Dr. Diethelm pain.

Nevertheless, even as he put the prohibition on himself, Old Nathan spoke once more:

"Yes. He will take Dr. Gyde's practice for a year. You know Dr. Gyde is going to Europe. But I do not want Saul should live always in a little town. To be with an old father in a place like Gibeon is not a future for a clever boy."

Dr. Diethelm, who had dreamed that one day—also not in Gibeon—his son would join him in practice, nodded his head.

"I am right—not?" persisted Old Nathan, and despised the weakness in himself which could not keep his triumphant paternity tight-locked. But yet, again, he consoled himself with the thought that it would have been unfriendly and secretive—perhaps, indeed, offensive—not to tell Dr. Diethelm that his son was coming to Gibeon as his colleague and competitor. And, really, it was ridiculous. Why should he not tell him? What could be more natural?

But, further back still in his mind, he knew that

rightness or wrongness had nothing to do with his discussing his son with Dr. Diethelm. He was bound both to speak and to discover good reasons for doing so.

"Yes, you are right," assented Dr. Diethelm, and seemed to look past Old Nathan.

There was a silence, and then Dr. Diethelm reached down for his hat, which he always placed on the floor beside him.

"It is getting late," he said.

Old Nathan accompanied him to the door, and it seemed as though Dr. Diethelm would go away without another word except a curt good-night. But then Dr. Diethelm could not quite do that. And, fumbling about for some general sort of remark to make, he gave Old Nathan a piece of news.

"I hear the Levites are coming to the Heights again this year," he said.

CHAPTER II

I

EVERY year, for the past six years, the Levites had come at this season—the time of the Christian Easter and the Jewish Passover—to the Heights of Gibeon.

This was the seventh year.

The Levites were Kaffirs. But they were not a tribe, they were a religious body. There were Zulus among them. There were Pondos, Tembus, Bechuanas, Basutos, Batlapins, Fingoes. It did not stop at that. There were natives from Rhodesia and Portuguese East Africa, and there were even two from Nyassaland.

This was their origin. A certain Fingo preacher called Lucas M'fula, a Wesleyan Methodist, had, about ten years before, been dismissed from his Church for certain ideas and enthusiasms unbecoming, it was thought, in a black minister.

To begin with, he had asked the sort of questions Christ himself might ask if he came back to earth and entered a church. "What religion is this?" Christ would whisper to the old gentleman sitting beside him. "What are those people doing? What does it mean?" . . . "'Sh!" the old gentleman would answer. . . . And then he, Lucas M'fula, had an unorthodox and unsettling way of interpreting Scripture. He thought everything in the Holy Book was equally holy. He understood the Word from an unpractical Kaffir point of view. He put ideas into the earnest, peppercorned

heads of his dark congregation which, being dark, they had no business to have. He told them that God loved them as much as he loved the white people, and that they had no less right to his bounties.

They nodded attentively. The Rev. Lucas M'fula was driven out of the Church.

So now he went to America. And there he found a religion which really suited him. It had prophets and it had bishops. It followed Jewish ritual and it followed Christian ritual. It circumcised its young males and it ate the consecrated wafer. It observed the Hebrew Passover and it practised baptism by total immersion. . . . It seemed to Lucas M'fula that if one embraced this religion one must be rendered doubly safe for eternity.

He adopted it with conviction, left in America his three sons by his first wife, that they might be trained in the new theology, returned to South Africa, changed his name to Aaron, went about the country preaching the new gospel to his Kaffir brethren, gathered a following, named his adherents Levites, and assumed then that they were the chosen of God. Did it not say in the Bible: "Levi hath no part nor inheritance with his brethren"? Had the black man any inheritance? Who should Levi be, therefore, but the black man?

The identification seemed complete. The Kaffirs could see for themselves that the black man had no inheritance. They stared, in bitter acquiescence, at the preacher.

Aaron, who had once been Lucas M'fula, was a big, very dark native of about forty-five. He had a protuberant forehead; bold, shining, black eyes with yellowed whites; a broad, aquiline nose with tremen-

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dous, wide-open nostrils; a high, dark-lipped mouth; and a retreating chin on which the priestly beard refused to grow. There were only a few scattered wiry hairs on it and on his upper lip. He had outlived two wives, and the three younger children of the first and the four children of the second all lived with the second wife's father and mother. The old people were glad to have the children. They still spoke in the ancestral way. "They shall carry water for us in our old age," they said.

Aaron himself pursued too busy, too wandering, a life to maintain a home. Like most born leaders, like many whose work is for the world at large, he was not a devoted family man, nor did he care for human beings as individuals. He was impatient, selfish, wrathful. He suffered from *le petit mal,* which seemed to do him no particular harm; indeed, an occasional epileptic aberration—outwardly nothing more than a sudden, trance-like stare—was impressive rather than otherwise. It happened that religion had found him. But any other sufficiently engaging cause would have given him equal enjoyment. For that was really what he got out of it—a fierce enjoyment. He was, in short, the kind of man that springs up, without reasons of race or circumstance or heredity, at any time in any part of the world.

The voice in which he addressed his Kaffirs was not the majestic organ it should have been, but it was charged with the passion that was part of his personality. He spoke in Zulu, which most of them understood, and those who did not had it interpreted to them.

He said: "My brothers, I have told you the Word

of the Book: 'Levi hath no inheritance with his brethren.' " . . .

"Yes, this you have spoken. This we know," said an old man with grizzled peppercorns on his head and a little, difficult grey beard.

"And therefore you think that God has passed over his black children?"

"You have said it yourself."

"Have I said it?"

"So we understood."

"And that is the end, you believe?"

"We know nothing more."

"My brothers," cried Aaron, "open your eyes that you may see my light, and your ears that you may hear my speaking. It is to us God has given his highest inheritance. I say it is ourselves, his black children, he has least forgotten."

He held up a strong, black, admonitory forefinger. He was a man, not very stout, but yet with fat on him, and the skin on his dark, lifted hand was shiny.

" 'Levi hath no inheritance with his brethren,' the Book says. But it speaks further. 'The Lord is his inheritance, according as the Lord, thy God, promised him!' "

He moved his lifted forefinger impressively.

"That is the gift God has given to the Levites. He has given himself."

There was no sensation. This highest gift Aaron spoke of seemed to his hearers a possession vague and embarrassing. They wanted wives, children, fat oxen and lands to plough.

"And then the Book says: 'The Levites shall be mine. I am the Lord.' "

That seemed to carry the matter not much further. They wanted the vote and the right to work.

"And then it says: 'Thou shalt appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall wait on their priest's office.' "

They looked at the clothes they were wearing—the sweepings of charity and cheap purchase.

"And then it says: 'Command the children of Israel that they give unto the Levites of the inheritance of their possession cities to dwell in; and they shall give also unto the Levites suburbs for the cities round about them.

" 'And the cities shall they have to dwell in, and the suburbs of them shall be for their cattle, and for their goods, and for all their beasts.' "

Here was something they could grasp. They stared at one another, and murmured softly.

" 'The Levites shall be mine,' " Aaron repeated in an exalted voice. "My brothers, we are the chosen of the Lord."

2

How did he explain it historically, geographically, ethnologically? He said people changed, but the Lord's Word went on. And, in fact, he need not have explained it at all. He was speaking to a folk who had an impulse towards belief.

The message went about the kraals and locations, and when the new Aaron, selecting the Heights of Gibeon as a site for his tabernacle, journeyed thither, a hundred and fifty men and women who had accepted Levitical distinction followed him in the first year. And in the second year four hundred followed him. And in the third year six hundred. And during the

next three years ever and steadily more came, until in the sixth year there were fifteen hundred of these Levites. But in this, the seventh, year there were a thousand more even than that: there were two thousand five hundred Levites of various Kaffir tribes, with their beasts and their possessions, on the Heights of Gibeon, there were as many of them almost as there were regular inhabitants in the town at the foot of the Heights.

Now when first Aaron had come with his holy fraternity, everything had gone with sweetness. To begin with, there had only been a small trail of pilgrims walking down the red road with bundles on their heads. And Aaron had hired a private lot in the Kaffir location on the Heights, and he had put up a shack of reeds for a tabernacle, and he had celebrated the Passover, and he had stayed for just ten days, and he and his charges had duly departed, filled with God and beneficence. The second, the third, the fourth years had also passed without occasioning more than a natural interest in Gibeon.

But in the fifth year there came twelve hundred Levites, and in the sixth year there came fifteen hundred, and they overflowed on to ground not reserved for natives, and they stayed for nearly a month.

And now there was restlessness among all the natives in Gibeon and on the farms about. And some suddenly left the service of the white man to enter instead the service of the Lord. And the farmers complained that their cattle were disappearing. And, indeed, how else, they said, could the Levites subsist for a month on the Heights without working and without stores?

During this, their sixth annual celebration, a certain

Mr. Arnold Duerden, a solicitor of Gibeon, placed himself at the head of a body of Vigilants, and they sent in protests to the Government, and they drilled publicly, and at night they patrolled the streets, and they let the Kaffirs see that they were capable of frightfulness.

Nevertheless, in the following year Aaron applied formally and meekly for permission to hold his usual Passover services on the Crown lands on the Heights. He promised that he and his people would only, as originally, stay for ten days, would celebrate their festival quietly, and as quietly depart. There was some hesitation, but it was, after all, a decently religious matter. And now that so much Socialism was running about the land, it might even be politic to give the natives this rival outlet. Better they should stake their hopes on heaven than on earth. Aaron's petition was granted.

CHAPTER III

I

Old Nathan was not shocked when Dr. Diethelm told him that the Levites were coming again. To begin with, there was a mild cynicism in him which made him regard human chagrins and vagaries with an interested amusement. Then he had a not unusual satisfaction in disquieting news. Then, again, it was a picturesque event. Finally, there was a twist in him which made him instinctively support the unpopular cause merely because it was unpopular.

For instance, although his son had gone to the war, and with his concurrence, although he maintained that, as a Jew, he could nowhere have been as happy as he was under England and in South Africa, he held to it persistently that Germany was not responsible for the war. In Germany he would just as persistently have declared that the Allies were not responsible for the war. As it was, he spoke with such incautious sympathy for the Germans that it was only because there were many Dutch in Gibeon who had not very violent partisan feelings, and because his manner was soft and he was regarded as a character, and he had, after all, not hindered his son from going to fight, that disaster did not befall him.

It was also a fact, of course, that he found the presence of a large number of natives not unprofitable to him in his business. But, as it happened, he hardly

thought of this. It simply pleased him to see his fellow townsmen running about in agitation while a horde of Kaffirs served the Lord according to their Biblical instructions.

Now the people of Gibeon went out by motor-car, by motor-cycle, by cart or on horseback, to see the arrival of the Levites.

The Levites came in long columns, black men and women and children, mostly barefoot, wearing blankets or shawls bright with great red and yellow and blue designs, or else the drab clothing of Europeans—with laden ox-wagons and horses and cattle and herds of goats and sheep.

Aaron, in a scarlet robe, sat on a horse at the head of the procession. And, as they marched along the red and sandy road, through the barren, stony, treeless veld, they sang English hymns and made them sound earthy and savage and African.

Old Nathan was standing beside Arnold Duerden. He had come out, and so had Duerden, in the car of the proprietor of the Phœnix Hotel.

"Well, I think your Vigilants will be busy this year," he said.

Duerden remained staring silently at the crowded road.

Old Nathan waved his hand at a herd of cattle.

"The Levites will not go this time in ten days," he continued.

"Won't they, by God!" demanded Duerden.

"At any rate, they do not intend to," said Old Nathan.

"We'll see about that," said Duerden.

"So I said," agreed Old Nathan with provocative gentleness. "I said you will be busy this time."

And he added:

"It is, I remember now, the seventh year."

Arnold Duerden ignored the remark. And Old Nathan, thinking that he might—who could speak definitely about these people?—be wrong in his deductions and that it might therefore be wiser not to be persistent, became silent.

But, as it happened, he was not wrong. That was the whole point. It was the seventh year. And the Bible said that for "six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard and gather in the fruit thereof.

"But in the seventh year shall be a Sabbath of rest unto the land, a Sabbath for the Lord: thou shalt neither sow thy field nor prune thy vineyard. . . .

"And if ye shall say, what shall we eat in the seventh year? Behold we shall not sow, nor gather in increase:

"Then I will command my blessing upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for three years."

It was not a mathematical fact that the sixth year in this new dispensation had been, agriculturally speaking, a triple year. But what was faith for if one could not ignore mathematics? Now therefore the Levites had come to Gibeon this time with their goods and their grain and their cattle; they had come earlier than usual, and they had come to celebrate the Sabbath year of the Lord. And, whether all of them knew it or not, their sojourn at the Heights of Gibeon this time was meant to be for a year. And Aaron com-

manded them to put up a building of unburnt brick to be their tabernacle, and they erected themselves huts of reeds, and then enclosed their herds within loose stone fences.

2

Then they set about celebrating both the Jewish Passover and the Christian Easter, and, for special safety in the present and hereafter, there were also some who did not neglect a few of their native rites. That is to say, they prayed to the spirits of their ancestors, and danced under the moon, and had a witch-doctor throw bones for them. It was not physically impossible to combine these things with the eating of unleavened bread, the celebration of the resurrection, the baptism by total immersion at midnight, the exchanging of kisses of peace, and the offering of sacrifices in front of their tabernacle, as the Old Testament enjoined.

As a matter of fact, they preferred the Old Testament to the New. They found it humanly more satisfying. The New Testament wanted too many things sacrificed in this life for the sake of a mysterious after life. The Old Testament gave a man such punishments and rewards as he could see. If he was wicked, he suffered plagues and other disasters. But if he pleased the Lord, the Lord subdued his enemies and gave to him their "fat land, and houses full of all goods, wells digged, vineyards and oliveyards and fruit trees in abundance," so that he might eat and be filled and grow fat.

In the Old Testament too a man might have many wives and concubines, and he was encouraged to make

war. In their hearts the Levites loved the Jehovah of the desert above the God of Israel and the Christ of Galilee. He seemed to be a person not altogether unlike their own Chaka.

But here was a strange thing, thought the followers of Aaron. The New Testament demanded that people should give up their possessions and be at peace with one another. Yet those who subscribed to it were, as anyone could see, the owners of nearly all the earth and the makers of nearly all the wars. And, on the other hand, the people who observed the Old Testament, which held out the promise of earthly riches and had a God of Wrath—these people had no country at all, and they were most mild in their disposition.

That, in fact, was why they, the Levites, maintained the principles of both Books. If one Book was more attractive, the other produced better results. How, contrary to the Word, all this had come about they did not understand. But certainly the Christians were materially more successful than the Jews, they had the pride and the power and the iron-shod feet. Our Levites followed therefore the Old Testament for pleasure and the New Testament for profit. And they added to these also an odd scrap or two of their native customs, because, after all, a Kaffir could really not be too careful, and the departed ancestors to whom one prayed might—who could tell?—be in the position to do one a good turn in the next world. . . .

In the meantime, they offered up before the tabernacle young bullocks, rams—unfortunately not without blemish, as they should have been—lambs of the first year, unleavened bread, cakes unleavened anointed with oil, and wafers unleavened anointed with

oil. . . . This lack of leaven suited them very well, for it was how they were accustomed to make their dough. They simply mixed their mealie-meal with water and a little fat and salt, and put it among the ashes, or in the stew of their meat, or in a pot of fat. . . . The unleavened bread and cakes, therefore, were quite pleasant to them when, after they had served their sacrificial purposes, they ate them. And they ate also the animals that had been sacrificed, and danced and lifted up their voices with joy, as King David had enjoined the chief of the Levites. And, for the rest, they waited in bearable idleness for the Lord to appear among them.

That was what Aaron had promised would happen in this year of Sabbath. "At the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. . . . I will meet you to speak there unto you."

Those were the words of the Lord.

CHAPTER IV

I

MEANWHILE Mr. Arnold Duerden went about Gibeon and its environs pressing men into his Vigilance Association.

There were in and near Gibeon people of English and of Dutch extraction in almost equal numbers, and they met one another not unpleasantly. Now and then an Englishman would absent-mindedly, and out of old mechanical habit, assume a superiority over the Dutchman; or, on the other hand, the Dutchman, with a new national self-consciousness, would try to bully the Englishman; but there was no deep meaning to it. They were coalescing under the title of South African, and what they chiefly felt was the necessity of making common cause against the arising Kaffir.

On this understanding Arnold Duerden invited any man he considered a decent white man to join his association.

He had adequate time for such enterprises. His profession did not, in these days, engage him unduly.

It was strange that he should have turned out such a failure. He was so full of good qualities. He had an impressive body, triumphant health, enthusiasm, energy. He was a sportsman. He was a clubman. He had high standards of what a gentleman might or might not do. He was deeply loyal. He was so honest

that he simply could not tell a lie. Subtlety, subterfuge—he did not understand the words.

He was decently-born too. His ancestry was sound upper middle-class English and Irish joined with a thread of reputable Dutch, and his father had, in his time, owned one of the largest farms in the district.

He was even handsomely educated. He had gone to Cambridge, had eaten dinners at the Middle Temple and been called to the Bar.

Yet, when he returned to South Africa to practise as an advocate in Johannesburg, it can hardly be said that he did so.

Strange. And still, come to think of it again, not so strange. Arnold Duerden did have a defect. His brains were not very good. Even then he might have achieved at least a temporary success at the Bar if it had not been precisely for his advantages. He was too many-sided a social being, too good a sportsman, and no one took him seriously. He was, in addition, reputed to be so rich—he had the manner—that the attorneys who were his friends did not feel the necessity of expressing their regard for him in the shape of work. The truth was that he received a bare living allowance from his father, and he was too proud to attempt to allure favours, and too humanly flattered, also, at being considered a man of means, to correct the mistaken impression.

His time was filled with social engagements, but hardly with professional engagements. He had invitations to dinners and dances and games every night and every week-end, but from nine to five during the working week he sat in an enforced idleness that withered the very roots of his manhood.

When, once in six months, he was given a casual brief, he had not the self-confidence, the experience, the understanding, the ability—and also, alas! not the mother-wit—to carry his work through to a satisfactory conclusion.

He ceased to be thought of as a practising barrister. He received not even a casual brief.

Then he grew ashamed to be seen as a man who wanted work and was not given it. He began deliberately to endorse the general idea that he was among those who are called to the Bar, not as a means of livelihood, but simply as a matter of educational form.

He was thankful when the Great War came along, and gave him a reputable reason for leaving Johannesburg. He proved a splendid soldier. He returned to Johannesburg in 1919, a major. He looked most manly and martial in his uniform, with his thick, wavy red-brown hair, his red-brown eyes, his red-brown face, his big solid chin that descended from his mouth without a dent beneath his lower lip. His body was set as strong and unyielding as a tower of stone on his legs that stood like pillars. He had large, strong hands with red-brown hairs on them.

He looked with contempt at the men who had never ceased work at the Bar, and with envy at those who had returned to a substantial practice. He sneered at most of them for not possessing attributes of this or that manly nature.

Shortly afterwards his father died intestate. That meant the equal division of his property among the members of a large family. There was not enough to make any individual wealthy. Arnold, after trying in

vain to get some military post, settled down in Gibeon as an attorney.

He was no more fortunate in Gibeon than he had been in Johannesburg. He might give plausible explanations of why he had decided to come home, but everyone knew that he would not have done so if he had been a success in Johannesburg. And then, being one of the important Duerdens, he had a pride to maintain in Gibeon. He was prepared to be friendly with certain people but not with other people. He did not like Jews, he did not like Indians, he did not like Kaffirs. And although he was not exceptional in this respect, he did not even manage to disguise his feelings for business reasons.

And it was the trading Jews and Indians who were litigious in Gibeon, who wanted money collected, demands sent, bonds passed, contracts made or broken; and to the Kaffirs in their kraals outside the town things were constantly happening which they did not understand and concerning which they wanted advice and guidance: not only the ordinary things of social beings, but the special Kaffir things.

For instance, the young man had not finished paying off his lobola for his bride—he had married her while still owing two oxen—and so the bride's parents were entitled to his first-born, but now the young couple refused to hand over the child. Could not the law help the cheated parents?

Or the chief was threatened as to his chieftainship by a rival. Who—let the lawyer put justice in motion—was entitled to be chief?

Or there was a holy snake at the well, and its life was being threatened merely because it had bitten a

few drawers of water and caused their death. How could one safeguard the snake?

Or there was trouble concerning the land they were living on. Were they not entitled to have their location on this land?

Such a question involved a whole tribe, and they would collect cattle to pay the lawyer, and one or two attorneys in Gibeon had become considerable farmers in this way.

But not Arnold Duerden. Though the Kaffirs respected him, they did not go to him. He did not seem to understand them, he could not touch the heart of their perturbation.

As for his own friends—the civil servants, the headmaster of the school, one or two of the doctors, a few of the larger farmers—they had no work to give him. And it was the bitterest chagrin of his professional existence that the Scotch bank-manager, who had at first supported him, had subsequently transferred his work to a small, ugly Jew called Bramson, with thick lips and bandy legs, just because the Jew had once opposed Duerden in a case he had for the bank, and, by Heaven knew what legal delvings and applications, had won it.

Duerden met the bank-manager now with a cold brightness, and the bank-manager responded with a propitiating embarrassment, an even eager and cajoling friendliness, but it was years since Duerden had had any work from the bank.

The manner in which Duerden met Bramson was different from the manner in which he met the Scotch bank-manager. It was not pleasantly haughty, it was,

strangely enough, considering that Bramson had beaten him, contemptuous.

Bramson's black eyes raised themselves to the red-brown ones, six inches nearer heaven than his, with a meditative scrutiny and a trail of thoughts leading far back and far forward.

And what Duerden always came back to was why a Jew called Abrahamson should take the name of Bramson.

By this he did not mean that it was an ineffective escape from the disadvantages of its predecessor, or that, on a matter of taste, Abrahamson was a not unsuitable appellation for an Israelite. He meant (though he did not know what he meant) that a Jew should not attempt to take on a protective colouring and so lose his natural handicap. He simply could not imagine himself changing his own name, he said.

And that was true. He could not imagine it because, first, he was too full of the courage of what he was and stood for, and because, second, he had no imagination. . . .

However, the way Duerden looked at the bank-manager or Bramson made little difference. There was, after the lost bank case, the affair of the will which was held to be invalid because Duerden had carelessly omitted to instruct his client, the testator, to initial each page he had written on. There were several other things that went wrong. In these days Duerden's chief occupation consisted in sitting at the Gibeon Club and pointing out that the country was run and over-run by the wrong people. In the afternoon he played golf. In the evening he played bridge —not too well. He organised the amateur theatricals,

the tennis tournaments, the bazaars and the dances. He managed his home. The only thing he did not do was earn a living. And whenever he ventured his dwindling patrimony in some scheme or other it was returned to him still further diminished.

2

If he had not married just before he left Johannesburg it might not have mattered so much. In a place like Gibeon he could have supported a bachelor existence on the money he had inherited from his father. However, not only was he married, but his wife was a woman who, as anyone could see, was entitled to expect something of the world.

Hermia Duerden had a supple body, short black curls, light, clear eyes set under straight, very black brows, a warm colour and a lovely laugh. She had a gay, and apparently artless, manner of speaking and singing and writing. When she came on to a tennis court, or smiled from a concert platform, the scene sprang into vital being—it was as if the breath of life had suddenly been blown into the clay of Adam.

Yet even today, when Arnold Duerden carried failure in the very arrogance of his face, his walk, his voice, his whole self-conscious, frightened, angry, resentful, swaggering approach—even today people did not wonder that Hermia should have married him. After all, he was a Duerden, he was attractive to look at, he had been to Cambridge, he was qualified to practise a gentlemanly calling, he could play games, he had a good war record—it was merely unfortunate that he was not professionally more successful. No, they did not think it strange she should have married

him, but they often told one another how sorry they were for her, and what a gallant fight they thought she was making.

It was, in fact, Hermia who now maintained the Duerden home, her husband and her child. She undertook singing engagements in the bigger towns or villages, went on tour with concert parties, ran a tea-room in Gibeon, wrote for several newspapers. She was "Our Gibeon Correspondent," she was the person who, under this or that name, did little amused, ironic articles about the queer things that happen on the farms and in the small towns of South Africa.

With it all, she spoke affectionately of her husband as of one whose luck would change one day. But no one knew whether she meant it, or whether she was merely proud.

3

In his canvass of members for his Vigilance Association Duerden came, in due course, to Dr. Diethelm.

"Well, Diethelm," he began, in a cheery let-bygones-be-bygones tone of voice that he thought very appropriate for using towards a German, "well, what do you say about the Levites this time?"

Dr. Diethelm answered him with his usual moroseness. He was not a man who loved his fellow-man, and he particularly did not love Major Duerden. By clear lines of communication he connected him with the people who had wrecked his consulting-room.

"Their religion is not my business."

Duerden brought himself to ignore the rudeness. "Good Lord, and it isn't mine," he agreed with a hearty tactfulness that did nothing but irritate the un-

willing German. "So long as they don't practise it on the Heights. But do you think it is safe for us here in Gibeon to have two and a half thousand black fanatics hanging over our heads?"

"What is ever safe?" asked Dr. Diethelm, and saw, in his mind, his dead son and his own denuded existence.

"Exactly," agreed Duerden with philosophical acquiescence. "Nothing." And, taking advantage of the opening to score a point, he added: "No, as you say, nothing. And certainly not Gibeon while the Levites are feasting and singing and dancing and getting drunk with religion on the Heights. That is why we want to take precautions."

"What precautions?"

"This Vigilance Association of ours."

"Isn't it better to leave such things to the Government?"

"And sit still and wait for the explosion?"

Dr. Diethelm could not have explained what there was about Duerden's forceful and reasonable tones that provoked him. But it was an effect Duerden often had on people. They knew he wasn't clever, and they could not bear him to seem to be in the right. Why? They didn't consider. The deep and hidden truth was that they respected wisdom and hated to see it cheapened by being anybody's property.

Dr. Diethelm did not resist his impulse to oppose Duerden.

"And you think you can prevent this explosion?"

"We mean to try."

"With these Ku Klux Klan methods?"

"The original Ku Klux Klan succeeded."

Dr. Diethelm remembered again his consulting-room.

"I am not a believer in such things."

"You won't join us?"

Dr. Diethelm's eyebrows twitched slightly, but the rest of his face was a rock.

"No," he said.

"No?" repeated Duerden with a little angry swagger in his voice, and the justifiable feeling that his tactfulness had been wasted.

Dr. Diethelm stared at him. He sat and stared. It was no wonder, really, that he was not popular. No one could bear that hard, wordless stare of his. It was too disconcerting.

Duerden laughed shortly. All the cheated amiability was gone from him.

"As you like, then," he said, and added slowly: "I should have thought a German, of all people, would have been pleased to identify himself once more with the common good."

Dr. Diethelm did not answer him at once. Then he said: "I am busy."

Duerden, dismissed, his rusty-red face dark with resentment, went on to Old Nathan's shop. He should not have continued his task in the mood he was in. On the other hand, only activity, he felt, could stem his anger.

Old Nathan was leaning, in his habitual way, against the post of his stoep.

"May I speak to you a moment?" said Duerden, his voice still charged with the anger Dr. Diethelm had aroused in him.

Old Nathan felt himself unpleasantly stirred by the

abrupt tones. He wanted to refuse. But something in him—curiosity, a racial habit of propitiation ("Why, look you, how you storm," says Shylock to Antonio)—something like that prevented him.

"Please," he answered.

"I hear your son is back," said Duerden.

"He came seven—eight days ago."

"Will you ask him to communicate with me about joining the Vigilants?"

"I will ask him."

"That's all right, then," said Duerden. "Thanks." He turned to go.

His curt, commanding tone aroused Old Nathan.

"But, for my own part—" he said, arresting Duerden.

"Yes?" said Duerden, stopping.

"For my part, I will not advise him to join. Vigilance Associations remind me too much of pogroms in Russia."

"Really?" commented Duerden, with stiff politeness.

Old Nathan nerved himself to hold his ground.

"Yes, that is so. That is what I think."

"Then perhaps you would rather not trouble your son?"

At this Old Nathan weakened. He remembered suddenly that he had no right to answer for Saul. Saul might resent the interference.

"Oh, I'll ask him," he reassured Duerden hastily. "Didn't I say I'll ask him?"

Duerden looked at him with contempt. One had only to spurn such a man, and he came to heel, cringing.

"Where is he now?" he questioned briefly.

"Attending a case," Old Nathan informed him, and,

because he felt that Duerden had hitherto had the advantage of him, he abandoned a resolution he had previously made and began to boast.

"One hour after his plate is up Saul has a patient already," he said.

He knew Duerden would contrast this with his own workless state and be hurt.

Duerden smiled at him. "Good man," he remarked with a sort of negligent superiority, the established one congratulating the newcomer.

And he went away carrying his banner. But he was wounded as Old Nathan had meant him to be wounded. He thought of his empty table and the few dusty files on the shelves. He, Arnold Duerden, born of generations of men and women of the African soil, had time to go about asking men who would not give him work to join his Vigilance Association, but Saul Nathan, the son of an emigrant Jew, was too busy, a few days after his arrival, to see him.

"God, how do the bloody people do it?" he asked himself, and a heavy pain lumbered slowly and crushingly, like a traction engine, over his heart.

CHAPTER V

I

EXCEPT for a vacation five years ago, Saul and his father had not been together for eight years. And for months before Saul's arrival the old man had gone about in a state of beatific anticipation. They would be such friends, he thought; he would take such an interest in Saul. He knew there was more than the ordinary difference of the generations between them: there was also the difference of tradition and early environment. But, on the other hand, he was a man of fluid mind (so he told himself), he wasn't set. He could still run with the times.

He dreamed of the great talks they would have. He loved talking.

But Saul had not been back three days when Old Nathan saw that things were not going to be as he had imagined. After Saul had finished telling him about his work as a student and as a young doctor walking the hospitals—the mere facts—he suddenly had no more to say. Old Nathan never knew who had been his son's friends in London, what were his opinions, his disappointments, his aspirations. Saul was greatly reserved towards his father.

The days passed, and Old Nathan settled down to a kind of minor happiness in his son's presence. Now and then—because there was, after all, a tie which

painfully pulled him towards his begetter—Saul did say: "Come, father, let us have a game of chess." But when he played it was merely as a duty—to give the old man fun, not to give himself fun. His deep-set, introspective grey eyes above the prominent cheek-bones looked through the window, or at something lying in his neighbourhood, or at far-back happenings, while his father stared, in immovable meditation and with grinding brain, at the board. Sometimes Saul watched with a sympathetic amusement his father's little tricks, which did not elude him, because he was the better player. And, since he did not really care about the result of the game, and since he saw how his father despaired when he lost and exulted when he won, he did not press him too hard, he allowed him an occasional victory. It was a virtuous gesture, but it was a gesture grounded in the same feeling which irritated him when his father asked him questions or challenged him in argument. Its base was the pitying contempt, the impatient dutifulness, the fundamental desire for separation which lies between the straining child and the yearning parent.

Something of all this Old Nathan soon understood, and there were times when he asked himself whether, deeply as he loved his son, he had not, undisturbed by Saul's reservations concerning him, known a larger peace and a profounder self-confidence in his loneliness. This, however, Saul never realised as his father realised his son's mood. He had, like all children, a naïve complacency about his parent's enchanted regard for him. . . .

When Saul came home now from his case his father told him that Arnold Duerden had been looking for

him. "He wants you to join the Vigilance Association," he mentioned.

"I've been wondering when they'd come to me," said Saul.

"Will you join?" inquired Old Nathan.

Saul did not answer him at once. Then he asked him what the Vigilants were actually doing.

"Well," explained Old Nathan, drawing out the word into two singing notes and swaying his head, "well, you know what such a thing means. It means people are going about with a light to see if everything is in order. And when they come to something which is not in order—a little gunpowder, so to speak—they examine it very close with the light and they make an explosion."

Saul smiled. "I see. Now, of course, I know all about it."

"You think not?" queried his father. "Then you ask Duerden and let him explain. He will tell you the Kaffirs are on the hill and the Indians are in the town. And if he will not tell you the Jews are over everything he will have it in his mind."

"I must go and see those Kaffirs."

"They will not let you. It says on a notice outside their camp: 'No Admittance!'"

"What is Duerden afraid they will do?"

"Fall on the town, perhaps."

"What do you think yourself?"

It was not often Saul invited his father's opinion, and the old man was correspondingly flattered. He knew quite well that, however outsiders might like a man to be a character, his own family treasured him according to his rigidly conventional merits, according

to the way in which he met the world's accepted standards. The quaint grandmother, the artistic father, the exotic sister—their mumblings, their temperaments, their vagaries—were merely to their own people an irritation inside the home and an embarrassment outside it. Saul would quite have liked his father's manners and mannerisms if he had been someone else's father. But, since he was his own father, he wished that his soul and body, both, were frock-coated and top-hatted.

Old Nathan, struggling like an orator against a doubtful audience, responded eagerly to his son's interest.

"These natives call themselves Levites and believe they are of priestly standing," he replied. "Is it then to be expected they will leave their tabernacle for the kerrie and the assegai?"

"Dervishes fight," Saul pointed out.

"Perhaps because they are not left alone."

"Then you don't agree with Duerden?"

"I disagree with Duerden by nature."

"That isn't reasonable."

"It isn't unreasonable, for Duerden is by nature nearly always wrong."

"The end of it is you don't think I ought to join the Vigilants."

"Did I forbid you to go to the war? Everywhere is Rome for the Jew, and he tries to do like the Romans. If there is no interfering with the Kaffirs and their tabernacle, if it is only to make secret signs, and stand and talk at the corners, and run about the streets in the cold nights and catch a little influenza—" he shrugged his shoulders—"why should I say some-

thing to you? I will keep quiet my mind, and you will do, anyhow, what you wish."

Saul looked at his father as if he rather liked him. "You aren't quite a fool, you know, father," he said. And Old Nathan felt that he had been greatly complimented.

"Speak to Duerden yourself, then," he suggested.

"Will he be at the office now?" asked Saul.

"I can see you don't know much about Arnold Duerden yet," said Old Nathan. "What has he to do with an office? If he is not at the club, he will be practising golf or playing with his child at home. He is a good father, I hear."

Saul stretched himself.

A good father, he mused. Why did that sound derisive?

2

The Duerdens lived in a five-roomed white bungalow, and there was a small garden in front of it. Although land was very cheap in Gibeon, no one had the large grounds which customarily surrounded the best houses in the bigger and more expensive towns. Perhaps, indeed, the very fact that the land was cheap rendered it unattractive—made it seem not worth coveting. If one could always get as much land as one wanted, it was obviously not necessary to strain oneself to possess it. The houses in the streets of Gibeon stood almost as close together as they might have done in a London suburb. And everywhere in and about the town lay stretches of unused acres. And if one stood on one's stoep the whole veld lay empty beneath one's eyes.

It may be, then, that the houses crowded together for company. There was the great, lonely world outside. One wanted, perhaps, to hear the little noises of next door.

3

Saul rang the bell beside a half-glass door, and a native in a white drill suit and bare feet answered it. Saul asked him if Mr. Duerden was at home, and the native told him that he was not, but that if Saul wanted to see Mrs. Duerden he would fetch her. As Saul stood hesitating, a voice which he thought very attractive, a voice clear and extremely audible, called out: "Of course, you want to see me. Do go inside. I'll be with you in a moment. Get tea. Silence."

And Saul had hardly reached the living-room when she was there too, a woman with light-coloured eyes under very black brows, and black hair curling briefly about her round head.

She examined Saul quite frankly.

"I know you very well," she said. "Your father has been telling me about you for years. I have seen your photograph in uniform, and I've been looking forward to meeting you. I'm particularly glad it's you now, because I was expecting someone else. A woman."

They sat down. The room was large and rather untidy. There was a grand piano littered with sheets of music. A dog had left a few bones on the floor. Rain had soaked through one of the roughly whitewashed walls and made a map-like design on it. But there was a tall jar of Irish roses on a gueridon, and a mass of winter bramble leaves on a corner cupboard.

The curtains were heavily and coarsely and brightly embroidered. The chairs they were sitting on were disreputable to look at, but very comfortable to sit on. Saul felt that the room was as it ought to be. He was happy.

"I'm not in the mood for a woman today," added Hermia Duerden.

"Are you sometimes?" asked Saul, startled at the ease with which they had fallen into intimacy.

"Yes. When I want to be understood. But now and then, you know, you have a need to spread your personality. And you can't do that if people know too much about you."

She looked seriously at Saul.

"And then, again, what I want in almost everyone is a certain helplessness. I don't like strong, reserved people. I feel frustrated when they don't want to lean on me, and snubbed when they don't want to confide in me."

"You will find me weak and loquacious," said Saul, but he did not smile as he spoke, and that pleased Hermia.

"Well, then, we shall get on," she said. "Now tell me about yourself while we wait for Arnold. Have you met Arnold yet? What do you want to see him about? Nothing professional, I suppose."

Saul smiled slightly as he shook his head.

"Then may I know what it is?"

"Certainly. It's this Vigilance affair."

"It would be. I needn't have asked. I suppose you're joining. Everyone is."

"Shall I?"

"Do you really want me to tell you?"

"You sound as if you'd rather I didn't."

"I'd rather nobody did," said Hermia, with even more than her usual energy. "I'm utterly against it. I've told Arnold a hundred times that you create a thing spiritually as soon as you oppose it. Your act of tilting against windmills makes the windmills. Those Vigilants will feel so foolish if they find they have nothing to do that they will, consciously or unconsciously, see to it that they don't find nothing to do. And, on the other hand, the Kaffirs on the Heights will begin to wonder what it is the Vigilants are so afraid of, and, in wondering what it is the Vigilants are so afraid of, will call it into existence. . . . Well, but do you think I can get Arnold to see it? I tell you, Dr. Nathan, our household isn't worth living in these days. Arnold and I are having continual disputes about the Vigilants. I wish he were a busy lawyer and hadn't time for such things. Why isn't he, do you think?"

She had never before put anyone such a question. She could not have explained why she did so now, why this encounter had excited her to this excessive frankness.

But Saul, for his part, reflected that he had known this woman not fifteen minutes, and here she was, demanding not only a mutual unreserve, but asking him to account for her husband's professional failure. And, although he may have taken the first in jest, the second he could not. Accordingly, being a Jew, and having behind him generations of people who might not speak their minds, he felt embarrassed and distrustful.

"You forget, Mrs. Duerden, I'm a stranger in Gibeon," he said cautiously and excludingly.

She heard the withdrawn note in his voice, and swiftly looked into his eyes.

"Oh, yes, I do forget," she replied, and continued pleasantly: "Are you glad to be back? Do you find Gibeon at all different?"

Her tone had changed at once to a completely conventional level. It was the difference between a fresh and living spring and a standing pool. Saul had not expected her to respond so quickly to his uneasiness. But, since she had, that uneasiness took now a different form. It ceased to be a doubt of her and became a doubt of himself, and it grew speedily, as the moments passed, into a definite sense of loss. He felt as though he had had something precious thrust into his hand, and, distrusting its value because of its easy achievement, had let it drop. And, as he had not wanted what was offered, so he now wanted what was lost.

The tea came in, and Hermia went on chatting agreeably, and he talked and smiled too, but their association had moved to another sphere, and there it stayed until Saul, feeling unhappily that it was time for him to go, took his departure without having seen Duerden.

CHAPTER VI

I

THE consequence of all this was that Saul felt he must now please Mrs. Duerden by not joining the Vigilants.

Next morning, at eleven o'clock, Duerden saw Saul sitting on the stoep of his father's house which adjoined the shop, and he walked up the four steps to it, and smiled at him in the way which still could make people think him very attractive.

Saul gave him coffee, and they talked about football and golf and musical comedies and politics, and they discovered some mutual friends, and Duerden forgot that Saul was a Jew, but Saul did not.

And he looked at Duerden, and, all at once, felt sorry for him. He could see something young and frightened in Duerden. Duerden was puzzled by the sinister whims of destiny as a child is puzzled by the thwartings of its elders. He had once believed himself as good as any man, and better than most—at moments even now the illusion came back to him, but he had not received the world's endorsement of his opinion, and the heart within him was shrinking because his main fear these days was that the world might be right and he wrong. That was why he was a bully. It was his defiance of the world, his attempt to fling back in its sceptical face the distrust of him-

self with which it had infected him, and so free his laden soul.

Saul pitied Duerden, too, because Duerden was so feeble a mental match for him. There he was, unfortunate man, earnestly offering his opinions on things which seemed to Saul quite unimportant, and he was unaware of the ironical negligence which inspired Saul's polite agreements.

Saul looked at Duerden and thought how strange it was that Duerden belonged to the conquering race, and he, Saul, to the conquered one.

For he possessed the mental arrogance of a people which placed too high a value on its cleverness; and he did not realise that, however poor a receptacle Duerden himself might be for it, it was precisely this simplicity which went ahead and won, and this complexity which turned back on itself and failed. A great man or a great nation needed to have a blind spot, had not to see too much, had to shut one eye to hit the mark.

2

They spoke, of course, finally, about the Vigilants. "You're joining us, aren't you?" asked Duerden.

"I couldn't be a very reliable member," said Saul.

"How do you mean 'reliable'?"

"Well, as a doctor, you know, I couldn't undertake to do any particular thing in any particular time."

"We have two other doctors. We could arrange for a substitute when necessary."

Saul realised that he was in the presence of a man who was child enough to ask "why?" until he was told the truth. Evasions were useless. He had a

desire, too, to please himself and impress Mrs. Duerden by being courageous.

"I may as well be frank with you, Duerden," he said. "I don't want to join your Vigilants because I don't believe in them."

Duerden stared at him.

"Don't believe in them? Why not?"

Saul wondered how exactly Mrs. Duerden answered such questions from her husband. Would she speak in the same terms to Duerden as she did to him, Saul? Would she, in actual fact, as well as in animated explanation, tell him about "creating a thing spiritually" and "making windmills by the act of tilting against them"? He could not believe so. He understood, in the light of this thought, how far apart in all essentials the two of them must be. She could talk to him, fifteen minutes ago a stranger, but she could not talk to her husband. Well, he had seen that sort of thing before. Did contempt go with it? Yes, it must, he supposed, whatever its cover or disguise. . . .

He smiled as he looked at Duerden. What was the use of making subtle explanations to such a man?

"I don't think those Kaffirs mean any harm," he said negligently.

His indifference was an affront to Duerden's passionate interest in his cause.

"Oh, you don't," he said. "You've been here a week, and you know more than the rest of us?"

Saul thought about his own father and about Duerden's wife, but he mentioned neither.

"Well, it's my opinion," he said, amused within himself to remember how recently, and under what circumstances, he had formed that opinion, and how

it was now, curiously, his unalterable possession. So casually, sown in imitation, did principles spring up whose roots grew to a power that could crack the very rocks which opposed them.

"And if," said Duerden, "in spite of your opinion, there should be trouble?"

"I don't deny there may be trouble."

"Then—"

"You may force it," said Saul, taking his place beside Hermia and his father.

Duerden stood up.

"Let me assure you, Nathan, that this talk of yours isn't going to stop us from going on with the Association. That being so, there's a question I want to ask you: If the blacks do come down on Gibeon, will you avail yourself of our protection?"

Saul's dark skin grew greenish, but there were strips of red under his eyes.

"Oh, I'll have my job then," he said lightly. "I'll attend to your honourable wounds."

"There are only two men who have refused to join," added Duerden, his face pale too. "Diethelm and yourself."

He wanted to say something about their respective nationalities, and Saul knew it, and stood waiting for him. But he refrained, and their eyes met in a combat of silence.

Then Duerden turned to go. "There are some Indians you haven't asked," Saul threw at his departing back. But his heart was heavy. Was this victory? He did not know whether he was the garlanded conqueror or the chained captive in the triumph. But what was the difference? The unseen third who

always rode with these two, and whose name was Hate, was so much more powerful than either that, by comparison, victor and defeated showed equally insignificant.

3

He felt that, for compensation, he must receive Mrs. Duerden's approval. But he could not go to her house—to Duerden's house. And he dared not write her a letter: any letter, the shortest—"I have refused to join the Vigilants"—would carry an unjustifiable romantic meaning. The thing had to be casual. "By the way," his story had to begin. He went three times to the tea-shop she owned before he learnt that she seldom came there, and that she was now, in any case, away on a concert tour.

He thought then that he would like to talk the matter over with Dr. Diethelm, his fellow outlaw from the Vigilants. He told his father so. "You won't get sympathy from him," said Old Nathan.

Saul asked his father why, but Old Nathan shrugged his shoulders without explanation. "It is my idea," he said.

But his idea was not baseless. Dr. Diethelm had not come to play chess as usual last Saturday. He had sat (Old Nathan could not forget it) with his back to Saul's photograph until it had been removed. The whole way into Dr. Diethelm's mind Old Nathan could not go, he could not sense all his causes for jealousy. Dr. Diethelm was jealous because Saul had come back, and his own son had not come back. He had hated Armistice Day, though there he had not been alone. All over the world there were people

who suffered because peace had come—too late for those they had lost. Had come—making life and no longer death the rule, making death then more significant. Had come—ending the game of who should be destroyed and who saved, so that now unfairness was the stark result. Why should my husband, my son, my brother, be taken from me, and you receive yours again?

Dr. Diethelm's son was for ever nineteen, and Old Nathan's son had been granted his manhood. So much of Dr. Diethelm's bitterness Old Nathan could understand.

Then there was the second jealousy. Old Nathan had said to Dr. Diethelm as he passed his shop on his way to the hotel where he took his meals: "Well, next Saturday. Yes?" But Dr. Diethelm had answered hurriedly: "I will let you know. You have your son now. You don't want me." And before a protest could be made, he was away. Saul had made him feel a superfluity, and this jealousy, also, Old Nathan might respect.

The third jealousy, however, was professional, and meaner and more secret. Saul had not been back in Gibeon three days before a patient of Dr. Diethelm's had gone to him. Dr. Diethelm had told him a blunt truth, and the patient had said: "Then I can't lose by trying a younger man with newer methods."

A younger man with newer methods! Was this inexperienced cub to force him from his last fort? He had lost so much. Could not his work be left him?

This jealousy Old Nathan, thinking always of Dr. Diethelm as a man past hope, did not realise.

"Still, I must see the old man. I haven't done so

yet," said Saul to his father, and he went to call on Dr. Diethelm.

4

Dr. Diethelm asked him, in a gruff voice, to sit down, and their conversation was as laboured as if they were shouting from hill-top to hill-top in a wind. The only time Dr. Diethelm became, as it were, humanly audible was when he spoke of the Kaffir doctor, John Tetyana. Not only the black people went to Tetyana, he said, but also the poor whites. They thought, in their ignorance and superstition, that a Kaffir doctor was probably in touch with some abracadabra hidden from a European. He might be able to practise the witchcraft of the kraals as well as the medicine of the colleges.

"Not," said Dr. Diethelm bitterly, "that I envy him his poor white patients. If he can make anything out of them he is lucky. But it is irritating for a medical man to have black magic held over his head."

"Is Tetyana qualified, though?" asked Saul.

"He has a Scotch degree."

"And does he pretend to understand black magic too?"

"I haven't any evidence of it. But what do I know of his methods?"

He proceeded to speak of Tetyana in a manner which Saul thought definitely unprofessional; and, anxious to pass to another subject, he mentioned the Vigilants. "I am not joining. I hear you and I are the only two men who have refused."

It did not please Dr. Diethelm, it annoyed him, to

be bracketed with Saul. Perversely he said: "Do not be influenced by me. It is safer to be with the majority."

The man was too embittered. One could not talk to him. Saul rose with the feeling that he had been a fool to allow a chance word from Mrs. Duerden to force him into this isolation.

For isolation, he could see now, it meant. If every other man of any standing was in the Vigilance Association, and only he and Dr. Diethelm were out of it, and if even Dr. Diethelm held aloof from him, where was he to find comradeship? They would all think of him, all the members of the Association, as a slacker. And during this year that he must spend in Gibeon he would have only his father for company (because it would never enter anyone's mind to ask Old Nathan to join), and, if he chose, such people as were not considered worthy of belonging to what, in effect, was a kind of social club. He was a fool. He should have joined, if only nominally. If such a business did no good, it could also do no great harm. His father was wrong. Mrs. Duerden, who could so glibly direct his destiny and then seem to forget his very existence—was wrong too.

He went home. And, although he knew it was Mrs. Duerden and not his father who stood behind his decision, he pointed out to his father that it was easy for him, an old man, to talk, but that when he, Saul, listened to him, the results were more unfortunate. "It means ostracism," he declared.

"You can still join if you wish," said Old Nathan evocatively rather than sincerely, and he looked at

his son with curiosity, but also with sympathy. "How do you know, after all, that they are wrong and you right? It is sometimes laughable as well as pathetic to see, in the after years, the things for which people have martyred themselves."

Saul turned away from his father's sophistry. Tomorrow, he knew, Old Nathan would be prepared to argue on the opposite side, proving that no man had the right to live who was not also ready to die for his convictions. Nothing on earth, he felt in his secret heart, could bring him now to belong to this organization run as a plaything by a man like Duerden. But because the result of his decision was unpleasant, he wanted the comfort of blaming someone for it, and the closeness that made people friends and enemies, both at the same time, caused him to blame his father.

5

Unexpectedly soon, however, Saul saw Mrs. Duerden. Her concert party, in touring through some of the smaller Transvaal towns, arrived at Gibeon.

Saul went to the town hall, where the concert was being held, and he was full of a strange excitement. This woman, whom his reserved spirit had repulsed within fifteen minutes of their acquaintanceship, had, nevertheless, by a few chance words, been able to direct the course of his existence. She had not been able to influence her husband. She had not—though she must have spoken to many: she was clearly a woman who did not withhold her opinions—been able to influence any other Gibeonites. But she had needed only to cross his, Saul's, path to divert it.

He had thought of her a great deal during the last week, and he was surprised to find that his imagination had imposed on his memory. She was not the Hermia Duerden he had in his mind, she was a different Hermia Duerden: not better, not worse—merely different.

But no sooner did she appear on the platform than something within her vivified the dull audience. They were informed with energy. Their faces lightened. She made them see and hear.

Saul did not care greatly for singing. The singer was too much part of his singing, and that was seldom a beneficent intrusion. If the thick flesh did not hinder communion between performer and listener, the thick intelligence, the thick spirit, did. The throat was the least fool-proof of all musical instruments, and the singer the least musical of musicians.

Hermia's voice was not an operatic voice, and for that Saul could forgive her. He was not today so impressed by opera as he had been in his youth. His earliest disappointment had occurred in Paris. He had gone to Paris during his first vacation as a medical student, and he had entered the Opera House full of illusions nourished by romantic reading.

The Paris Opera had always been connected in Saul's mind with social and dramatic excitements over the début of new sopranos. Tenors loved the sopranos, and stars of other days stood weeping reminiscently in the wings. Critics gazed in portentous speculation at the ceiling, knowing that Paris could not sleep while their judgment was suspended. Women were laden with jewels, and men with orders.

A beautiful, mysterious comtesse with an uncertain past entered her loge. She was dressed in white velvet and diamonds. She leant back disdainfully.

The lights went out. The glasses were redirected from the comtesse to the stage. The soprano appeared. She took a miraculous something in alt. It was a voice of voices. Her fame was made.

At the intervals young men of aristocratic families crowded either into the comtesse's loge or into the new star's dressing-room. The air vibrated with repartee, passion, intrigue. . . .

But nothing like that had happened under Saul's eyes. The soprano had caused him to turn his eyes away from the stage, but they had not found recompense in any loge. He felt as he had done when, for the first time since childhood, he had attended a circus. To think that his heart had once stood still over this tawdriness, those tricks. The Paris soprano's poor fat form and her lovely high note were linked in his mind with the Gibeon's circus-rider's sateen skirt and her leap through the paper hoop. He supposed that, with determination, people could drug themselves into oblivion of the representation and meaning of opera and think of the disembodied music. He had never reached this sublimation. . . .

What did he care, then, that Hermia would never sing in grand opera? Here she was now with her clear eyes and her wide mouth that was not distorted in singing, with her tones that spoke and her deceptive simplicity, her gaiety and her wistfulness. She sang old French songs with a twirl of amused irony. She

sang, when she was recalled, a negro spiritual with an authentic primitive inflection, even a sudden raucousness, in her voice. She sang, later in the evening, some German lieder that made Saul look round suddenly to see if Dr. Diethelm might not be there, listening. But no. Two slow tears were not rolling down a lonely, defeated, remembering old face in the very last row of the hall. Dr. Diethelm had not come to the concert.

Saul felt that he must speak to her. He wanted to ask her, most unpatriotically, why she was wasting herself on the dorps of South Africa. He wanted to tell her, recklessly, that he was glad she was doing so.

He took out his notebook, tore a sheet from it, scribbled a few words, felt his heart beat with fright, crumpled the paper and put it back in his pocket. He hovered about after the concert in the shabby little vestibule of the hall.

There he saw Duerden, and most unexpectedly Duerden came across and spoke to him. He had, it seemed, in his pride, chosen to ignore Saul's refusal to join the Vigilants. Or perhaps it was a manifestation of sportsmanship. He asked Saul what he thought of the concert.

"I have never enjoyed any singing as much as your wife's tonight," Saul told him.

"Really? Do you think she has a good voice?" asked Duerden in surprise.

"She has everything," said Saul.

"I suppose you are musical," commented Duerden with a disparaging wonder in his tones, which was open

and yet too simple to be offensive. Clearly he thought music an unmanly diversion.

"Well," he added, "I give Hermia a free hand. It spoils her game of tennis, of course, going about the country on these tours, and not being able to keep up her practice, but I'm a modern man, and if she enjoys her singing I don't object."

There was a note of defiance in his voice, and Saul could see that Duerden was reducing his wife's work to a level below the necessity of keeping her tennis form, in order to save his own face. The idea had to be maintained that he, Arnold Duerden, was the head of the family and the breadwinner, but that if his wife chose to make a little pin-money in one way or another, he was prepared amiably to indulge her whim.

It was a pathetic little swagger, Saul thought, and he thought, too, how primitive he himself was to accept complacently the fact that a man should work for a woman, but to be so moved to contempt and sympathy by the revelation of a woman similarly supporting her husband. How staggeringly difficult, in the light of such an understanding of one's deepest feelings, it was to conceive of the basic equality of men and women.

He saw Hermia coming towards them, but continued to talk with Duerden as if he were unaware of her approach. Now that she was here he could not say anything either graceful or profound about her singing. He realised suddenly that he had mentally carried her far past the limits of their quite perfunctory association, so that he could not find a foothold on which to meet her. He shook hands with her and asked her how long she was remaining in Gibeon be-

fore going on to her party's next stopping-place. "We leave tomorrow," she said, and then her husband took her by the arm and marched her away to the home he graced and she maintained.

CHAPTER VII

I

It was as if that fact—the fact of the necessity which made Hermia the Duerden breadwinner—were a spur constantly pricking Duerden to manly demonstration. The day after the concert he called a meeting of the Vigilants. It was time, he said, that they investigated the religious—or perhaps the non-religious—activities of the Levites. They had promised to go away in ten days. What were they still doing up on the hill?

A body of Gibeonites, with Arnold Duerden at their head, drove out by motor-car to the Heights of Gibeon. As they slowly approached, little naked Kaffir children ran away from them and towards the camp, and young men on horseback spurred back to tell the news of their coming. And when they arrived at the two great whitened stones that stood on either side of the road, marking the entrance to the great kraal of reed huts and stone-fenced cattlefolds, they were met by the high priest, Aaron, sitting on his horse in his scarlet cloak, and behind him were his fellow priests in white garments, and around them were a rabble of children, naked, with enlarged navels and round, protuberant foreheads and big heads with hair like peppercorns. And, in the distance, stood a troop of women in dresses of dark print, spotted or figured: full-gathered blouses, full-gathered sleeves, full-gathered skirts descending

amply to the ground. And they all wore black head-cloths and, since this was a formal occasion, not the gay-coloured blankets in which they had marched to Gibeon, but the black, fringed shawls which they used to go to church. These dresses, these head-cloths and shawls, were their civilisation. They had passed—so they thought, and perhaps they were right—the women of the native territories, in their ochre-dyed dresses and shawls edged with rows of black stripes. They were far indeed from the naked women with the leg-bracelets who followed the old tradition. They were Christian churchwomen engaged in a Biblical celebration.

Between the reed huts at the back of them showed the far-stretching, pale landscape, its bareness accentuated by sudden, lonely trees. To the left two long hills were divided that a further distant hill might offer the deepest blue in the world.

Aaron faced the motor-cars drawn up before the white-washed stones, and held up his hand.

"Will the gentlemen kindly read our notice?" he said. "On the left-hand stone we have it in Zulu and Sesuto. On the right-hand stone we have it in English and Dutch."

His voice, thick and not deep-pitched, was, in keeping with his carriage and his whole demeanour, charged with defiance and determination.

The men from Gibeon had no need to turn their eyes to the right. They could not fail to see the warning on the stone as they came towards it. "Halt. No admittance," it admonished. No admittance of white men!

"You promised to leave in ten days," said Duerden. "Why have you not done so?"

"Are you the emissaries of the Government?" inquired Aaron, since, of course, he knew they were not.

Duerden's face darkened. But he answered with dignity: "We are the citizens of Gibeon."

"The citizens of Gibeon have no authority over us. We do not require their permission to be here. Our tabernacle stands on Crown land."

"We have come to ask you what your intentions are."

"Our intentions are known to the Government."

"We demand to hear them."

It was a duel between the arrogance of the hereditary conqueror and the defiance of the hereditary conquered.

The conqueror had a momentary victory. Aaron explained.

"We propose to hold special services in celebration of the Sabbath year."

"The Sabbath what?" asked Duerden of the town-clerk of Gibeon, who was sitting beside him. And he remembered, even as he spoke, that Old Nathan, too, had said something about a seventh year.

The town-clerk shook his head.

But Aaron had heard him. "In the seventh year shall be a Sabbath of rest unto the land, a Sabbath for the Lord," he informed Duerden.

"And you are going to spend it here?" asked Duerden.

"We have permission to celebrate fittingly the Sabbath of the Lord."

"Fittingly? What the hell is fittingly?" shouted Duerden. The town-clerk nudged his elbow.

"That is our business," said the Kaffir with sobriety.

Duerden shook off the town-clerk's warning hand. "I won't be spoken to like that by a nigger," he said quite audibly. Aaron looked at him without moving.

"We'll see how much celebrating you'll do," continued Duerden.

Aaron smiled.

"Take care," Duerden admonished him.

Aaron took a paper from within his red cloak. "We have a Government permit to remain here for special services."

The men in the motor-car looked at one another with chagrin. It was a bad end to their expedition. But its very ignominy presaged trouble for the Levites. A white man could not take defeat at the hands of a black man with equanimity. His white skin had to symbolise three times and more than three times the virtue of a black skin, or where, one to three in a dark and distant land, would the white man find security?

The passion in Duerden sank, throbbingly, into control. He said a few words to his friends. "The Government will be asked to withdraw that permit," he announced then to Aaron, "and, in the meantime, you will be boycotted on the streets of Gibeon. There will be no coming to Gibeon to buy food and to steal converts."

He pointed to the warning on the stones: Halt. No Admittance. "Your own notice will stand against you in Gibeon. Our committee will see to that."

The retreat was rescued from shame. The Vigilance

Association returned to Gibeon to put its threat into execution.

2

Now Duerden made arrangements for sentries to be posted about Gibeon, and he instructed the shop-keepers not to supply the Levites. No Kaffir without a pass—and how was a Kaffir on the Heights to get a pass, seeing that he had no white master?—was to enter Gibeon. No shop-keeper was to send supplies to the Heights. Duerden went personally to the traders, and was particularly stern with the Jews and the Indians, whom he did not quite trust. The Indians promised readily, most of the Jews with reservations, Old Nathan not at all. "I will take my orders from the Government," he said.

"Have you no esprit de corps?" asked Duerden.

Old Nathan smiled. "I did not know I belonged to your corps," he answered.

"But, as I told your son when he refused to join the Association, you will avail yourself of its protection if the need arises."

There was a pause. Duerden had a half-defined feeling that he had gone too far. He had always liked Old Nathan.

"I do not see the necessity for encouraging the need to arise," said Old Nathan at last, choosing his English very carefully.

Duerden stood looking at Old Nathan, and Old Nathan, his face greyer than usual, returned the prolonged stare

"Very well," said Duerden suddenly, and, without another word, marched away.

Old Nathan went back into his shop and wandered absently from one of its two small departments to the other, from the groceries and hardware to the stuffs and shoes. The young Dutch boy who assisted him followed him with his eyes.

It was the last thing Old Nathan wanted to do—to send goods to the Heights. He had no enterprise whatever. He was not a man who could possibly have become rich. He made a living because it was almost impossible not to make a small living in the childishly simple way he conducted his business: buying in small quantities, paying for them promptly, selling at such and such a profit, incurring the fewest possible risks and expenses, and having quite ascetic inclinations.

The idea of altering his manner of trading, of going out to seek for customers instead of waiting placidly for them to approach him, was really painful to him, it outraged his quiescent spirit. But, after Duerden left him, he walked up and down, considering schemes of defiance.

As the day declined, however, his temper sank with it, and by evening he was telling Saul that he was not going to unsettle himself in order to make a demonstration against the Vigilants. "They will think I am afraid of them," he said. "But I cannot help it. I am not a man built to do things. I will sell to the Levites if they send other Kaffirs to my shop to buy, but I will not take the trouble to go to them. I have no energy, Saul. Even if I am angry, I do nothing. It is a bad characteristic. The desert and the sea and the air are not conquered by people like me. I may think what I like. But they are conquered by the Duerdens of the world."

He nodded his head several times in self-deprecation. "I can only see, I cannot act," he said.

3

The members of the Vigilance Association had not picketed the town a week when they began to be busy. It was clear that several Indian traders were dealing with the Levites through natives working in and near Gibeon. These men had passes from their masters, and showed them readily to the pickets who, of course, had no authority to demand them, nor was there any evidence, except the evidence of simple sense, to prove that the things they were taking to their locations were not for themselves.

But then they became very audacious. The parcels the men carried were too many, the bundles on the heads of the women were too big, the Indian traders were too busy.

Duerden went to the leading Indian in Gibeon, a man called Dadabhai, and spoke to him very threateningly. Dadabhai was an elderly Hindoo who had a fair education, shops in several adjacent towns in the Transvaal, two motor-cars, much money, a wife under the earth, a wife in India, a fifteen-year-old wife in Gibeon. This little Gibeon wife was as lovely an Indian thing as the boy over whom Titania and Oberon had their quarrel, and she had already borne Dadabhai two children who had died at birth, and she now, with a tired indifference, carried about a wizened, large-eyed, rather revolting child of six months whom Dadabhai adored.

Dadabhai had risen to a position of mercantile im-

portance generally held among South African Indians only by Mohammedans, yet, with all his money, with his careful English in his nasal, sing-song voice, with the wife over whom he threw silken clothes and a veil of silver, he was always slightly dirty, never wore a collar or tie, was, as all the Indians, excluded from living in a good quarter in Gibeon. But he was extraordinarily litigious, and the young Jew who was his attorney made a steady income from him.

"Now you listen here, Dadabhai," said Duerden, "I warn you. We know what you Indians are about."

He never gave an Indian the courtesy title. Dadabhai might be a man of large means, and he, Duerden, might be a man living on his wife's bounty, but money could not buy an Indian politeness from Duerden.

"I don't understand you," said Dadabhai.

"Yes, you do. I mean this stealing through of goods to the Levites."

"I do not ask where the goods go."

"But you are aware of it."

"I am not aware that the law forbids me to sell goods to any particular religious sect."

"The Vigilance Association forbids you to do it."

"I am not accepting the authority of the Vigilance Association."

"You will suffer if you don't."

"What can you do to me?"

The Vigilance Association had discussed what they could do to enforce their prohibitions. Duerden answered him:

"We can post pickets outside your shop, and persuade people not to buy there."

The Indian exposed his gums and his red-stained teeth in a grimace.

"You Indians are not so well liked in Gibeon that people will defy the pickets to go to you."

"I will see my lawyer," said Dadabhai.

"By all means," said Duerden with a sudden expression of cold courtesy.

There was a pause. Dadabhai looked at Duerden out of the corners of his eyes.

"I have a proposition to put to you," he said at last, and waited for Duerden to say something. Duerden remained silent.

Dadabhai continued slowly:

"Can I come with you to your office?" He indicated his car.

Duerden narrowed his gaze at Dadabhai's impertinent suggestion that he should drive in an Indian's car.

"I will make an appointment to see you at my office," he said with dignity.

"When?"

"In half an hour's time."

He turned on his heel and walked away to his office. After a decorous interval Dadabhai, collarless as usual, followed him in his motor-car, which was the best motor-car in Gibeon.

In his dusty office, since it was a business and not a social occasion, Duerden gave Dadabhai a chair.

Dadabhai sat down, and again there was a silence.

"I have a large business," said Dadabhai presently, and his tones were even more slow, precise and nasal than was their habit.

Duerden nodded.

"The work I give my lawyer is worth a great deal to him."

A fire leaped in Duerden's red-brown eyes. The Indian twisted his lean, dark fingers about one another.

"I will transfer the work to you if your Vigilants will leave me alone," said Dadabhai.

There was an expression on Duerden's face Dadabhai could not understand. There was a feeling in Duerden's heart as if he were leaping to battle. A triumphant holiness was in him. He was not angry, he was happy.

He said to Dadabhai in a calm voice:

"Get out, will you?"

Dadabhai was puzzled by the beatitude of Duerden's face, by the sobriety of his tones. He sat still.

Duerden rose.

"Did you hear me?"

The feeling that prevents people from moving when they are told because they are puzzled how to assert their dignity kept Dadabhai to his chair.

"Or are you waiting to be kicked out?" demanded Duerden.

Dadabhai stood up quickly and hurried out to his motor-car.

Not in ten years, not since the war, had Duerden felt as happy as he did in this moment of his moral triumph. He was a man who needed money, only he knew how bitterly, and he had, with such spontaneous righteousness and adequate contempt, rejected the Indian's bribe.

He would not, he felt at this moment, have sold his exaltation for a fortune. He was, if only he could have

seen himself to his depths, positively grateful to Dadabhai.

4

He came home and told his wife, only yesterday returned from her concert tour, about the stand he had made. He was so happy in his virtue that Hermia loved him as if he were her child. Poor Arnold! Poor little Arnold! So young!

And yet what a man he might have made to uphold the authority of England in a savage outpost! How courageous and unquestioning a soldier! How he could, at command, have yielded his body to adventure and his soul to patriotic exercise! If only such things as war were endless!

But the Great War had done no more than harm him. It was as if his bottled-up spirit, opened for a time, had then been corked down again—to sour, to ferment. The wine of his being came out now, harsh, like vinegar. Yet even that was better than that it should be left unused, to agitate and explode.

He hurt Hermia often when he sneered at her interests and deprecated her efforts to make money. But she forgave him. He believed so heartily in male dominance, and his home was maintained by a woman. He never asked her if she had had a successful concert tour or how much she earned in the tea-room. He talked lightly of her scribblings in the papers. He did not inquire into her bank balance. His small inherited income, the very little he made in his office, sufficed to buy him clothes and drinks, to meet his subscriptions,

and to take him on his beloved shooting trips. He did not even support the little girl.

Only when they went out somewhere, when there was a question of playing host, he was splendidly lavish.

He was very energetic, always doing something. And if he was not busy outside his home, he made himself busy inside his home. He mended the fowl-run, or put up supports for the vines, or scolded the Kaffir servant. He had a passion for household management. He loved to entertain guests. The only occasions on which he ever encroached on Hermia's purse were when he went to sales to buy furniture, or when he ordered interesting things from the grocer and butcher. Then he said simply to auctioneer or tradesman: "Charge it, will you?" and they sent the accounts to Mrs. Duerden.

It was really rather fortunate that he was so concerned with their home, for Hermia was often away, and she was, in any case, a careless housekeeper. About this Duerden reprimanded her: "If I didn't attend to everything, we'd be living like Kaffirs."

Hermia always accepted his accusations with meekness. She pitied him as one bereft by destiny of his natural fulfilment. She hardly thought of him as a mature person. She loved him because he was hers and a failure.

5

He had one surpassing merit. He was, as Old Nathan had told his son, a good father. The little eight-year-old girl, Naomi, saw in him the centre of her

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world. That was because he could enter so completely into it. Hermia found her child an interesting study but not an interesting companion, and Naomi never missed her mother when she was away. Duerden dressed her and told her stories and played with her and walked about Gibeon with her. People were accustomed to seeing them together. She watched him while he practised golf strokes, and came into his room in the mornings and exchanged grave confidences with him while he shaved. These confidences were always abruptly broken off when Hermia appeared. So that she felt—as, indeed, she was—an intruder.

At such times Hermia hated both husband and child, and had it bitterly in her heart that they were excluding their breadwinner. But she had never yet, by word or expression, allowed Duerden to feel that their home was not dependent on his efforts. Instead she withdrew herself from the two of them not only bodily, but spiritually. She played her piano, in which neither of them was interested, she read the books that were beyond her husband's comprehension, she balanced the accounts whose difficulties were in her solitary care.

Naomi was a complete little Duerden. She hardly belonged, Hermia often felt, to her mother.

Now, as Duerden boasted about the attitude he had taken up towards Dadabhai, Naomi came into the room, and stood leaning against him as he spoke, and he played with her red-brown hair that was cut straight across her eyebrows and round her head so that her head looked like a bronze bell. She was old enough to understand his sense of triumph, though not the cause of it.

"Daddy's wonderful, isn't he, mother?" she said in an unexpectedly tired voice. She called her father daddy, but her mother by the more dignified appellation, and Hermia was too proud even towards her child to show that she cared.

Naomi gazed up at her father with her adoring, red-brown, Duerden eyes, and, abruptly, he stopped talking and looked into them. Then he put his hand on her forehead.

"Do you know that Naomi's not well?" he said to Hermia.

A pain of self-approach shot through Hermia. She got up from the piano-stool, and noticed, for the first time, the child's flushed face and feverish eyes. What did all her competence help if she was so bad a mother!

Duerden put her feeling into words.

"Really, Hermia, it would pay you better not to run about the country, and attend, instead, to your home and child. Why have I always to point things out to you? Isn't it enough that they can't turn round in Gibeon without me? Must I be housekeeper and nurse as well?"

It was his way of justifying his existence to talk like this, and Hermia, used to it and anxious about Naomi, did not reply to him.

"Now it's this damned Vigilance Association that takes up my time. Get the thermometer, Hermia. It's in the top right-hand drawer of the dressing-table. How long have you been feeling sick, Naomi? Why didn't you tell Daddy at once?"

He put the thermometer into her mouth, and examined it with experienced eyes. Hermia could not even

read a thermometer. She stood by painfully, like an outsider. The child's temperature was a hundred and two.

Duerden undressed her, excluding Hermia's assistance, and instructed Hermia to send for a doctor.

"Who?" said Hermia. "You forget Dr. Gyde is away. Shall we have Dr. Diethelm?"

"I don't like Dr. Diethelm," protested Naomi, and began to wail.

Duerden endorsed her objection. He had no confidence in the brusque, old-fashioned German, he did not like the idea of his speaking to Naomi in his harsh voice.

"But who then?" asked Hermia. "I don't see anything wrong with Dr. Diethelm."

She was thinking, as she spoke, of Saul Nathan. She had the wish that he might come. Without knowledge of his capacity, without question of it, she had the wish. And, despising herself for this aberration in this crisis of her child's illness, she would not mention his name.

But Duerden himself did so. Although he did not understand it, he had the same feeling about Saul that the poor whites had about the native doctor, Tetyana; he credited him, because he was alien, with mysterious power.

"There's Nathan," he said. "Ring him up, won't you?"

As Hermia went to the telephone she remembered, past her anxiety and self-reproach, with what racial and soldierly contempt her husband had often, lately, spoken about Saul Nathan. She wondered how far a

necessity was prepared to shelve an inhibition. If there had been no other doctor in Gibeon, would Arnold have called in Tetyana? That was the final test. And she knew he would.

CHAPTER VIII

I

It appeared that Naomi had enteric fever, and when Saul Nathan had finished his examination, Hermia walked with him to the gate, and, in a small, painful voice, asked him if it was serious.

"It's more serious than some illnesses," answered Saul. "But, really, Mrs. Duerden, you need not worry." There was an expression on his Slav face, with the deep-set grey eyes, that seemed to Hermia the most protective thing she had ever experienced. "Enteric where we can look after the patient isn't what it used to be in the Boer War. We'll sponge down Naomi's temperature, and we won't bore her by giving her nothing but milk for a month. By the way, about her temperature, don't be alarmed if it goes up towards evening. That's characteristic."

"Do you think she's been ill long, Dr. Nathan?" Hermia asked. "I've only just come back. I haven't been here to look after her."

She spoke as if it were her fault entirely that she had to go touring the country. She felt so too.

"Wouldn't Mr. Duerden have noticed it if she had seemed listless?"

"Yes, he would," said Hermia, bitter to think that Naomi was so much Arnold's care.

She remained silent for a moment. Then she said:

"Dr. Nathan, if I loved Naomi more, I wouldn't be so unhappy as I am. I owe Naomi a good deal to

recompense her for that. I'm not a good mother."

She had confessed as much as this to herself, but never before to anyone else. Now here she was opening the inner chamber of her being to the man who once before had withdrawn from it. She asked herself, as she spoke, why she should want to tell Saul things. What gave her the feeling that he was interested in her? For it was just this feeling which impelled her to self-revelation. He might refuse to acknowledge it to her, or to himself, for that matter, but there was in him, she knew, an urgent desire for her confidence.

He stood, silently, with his hand on the gate. She had crossed the bridge his thoughts had created, and had joined him on the side of intimacy.

"Why do you think you're not a good mother?" he asked finally.

"I grudge her the hold she has on me. Dr. Nathan, do you know what it is—the something one wants to keep to oneself?"

Saul recollected his own straining away from contact with his father. She was right. There was a quivering core of self within one's being that could not bear the touch of inquisitive, seeking hands. This core, by the dispensation of nature and tradition, was exposed to the cold, sharp probings of duty and conscience and intimacy. But, for oneself, one wanted to take it from its secret place only when the opportunity of warmth and enhancement was offered it by some romantic glow of sex or sympathy or admiration.

"One always grudges people their rights," said Saul.

"Even one's children?"

Saul smiled a little.

"I can't speak from experience. But I should imagine that where emotion isn't strong enough to kill thought —yes, even one's children."

"Then I don't feel for Naomi as I ought to do?"

"There's no ought."

"As it is natural to do?"

"Some people are fulfilled within themselves, and not by an outward extension of themselves."

"You mean motherhood is not necessarily a woman's justification."

"No human being can be justified through another human being. No human being ought even to be affected by another human being."

He paused a moment. "I'll tell you something about myself, Mrs. Duerden."

Hermia forgot for a moment her sick child in the satisfaction it was to her to receive a confidence from this man of no particular significance in the world.

"I am, by disposition, jealous and ambitious," said Saul. "That isn't anything unusual, of course. The most crawling little cadger wants things from life and people—believes he has a right to them. But Jews have, by their circumstances, to fight for a place, so they are naturally more competitive than others. Well, Mrs. Duerden, I was always pitting myself against actual or imaginary rivals. And when I was beaten I suffered. I don't now—at any rate, not so much. One day it struck me suddenly: Whether anyone else is better or worse, I am I. I am not made different by the other man's triumph or failure. If I can run the course in so many seconds, my running time is not altered because my rival can run it in a second less. I may not be the winner of the race, but my achieve-

ment is what it is. And if I am the winner of the race, my achievement is still only what it is. . . . Why should it matter to you, Mrs. Duerden, if you don't fulfil yourself in the manner of other women? Isn't it enough that you fulfil yourself?"

"Do I fulfil myself?" said Hermia.

"Don't you?" asked Saul.

"That is a question I often consider," said Hermia. "But even Naomi knows I don't fulfil an ideal of motherhood. I must go back to her now, Dr. Nathan. Arnold will be wondering what has become of me. I oughtn't to have stayed here so long. But thank you for speaking to me."

She moved away from the gate abruptly. "Well, good-night," she said.

Saul wondered in what mood, after this confidential break, she would receive him when he came to see the child tomorrow.

2

Hermia went into Naomi's bedroom, and, emotion still in her, said to her husband:

"This is my fault, Arnold. It wouldn't have happened if I had looked after her as I should have done."

Duerden indicated the child, and motioned her to silence.

Later, as they sat at dinner, he said: "I had no right to blame you for going on your tours."

He was a man of honest impulses. He was trying to be just. He was even reaching out towards self-condemnation. Yet he could not do it. He could not, though he tried most heavily, admit even to himself that he was blameworthy.

"It's our damned luck that you have to help things out," he said at last.

The admission, with what lay behind it, moved Hermia terribly. She felt that they were lost and lonely, the two of them. She began suddenly to cry. He got up from his seat, and put his big arms around her. "Why, Hermia, don't be so upset. There isn't any danger. Naomi'll get over it."

"Oh, Arnold, Arnold!" She leaned against his strong chest in pity for him, in pity for herself, because he could not understand her. They might strain body against body and never really meet. And yet they belonged to one another. She put her hand on his. There was something in the feel of his skin, his clean, hard, firm skin, that was intimate and comforting to her. "Oh, Arnold, I wish I could make you happy! I wish I could sacrifice myself to make you happy."

And, even as she spoke like this to her husband, and meant it too, she was thinking, in her very depths, of Saul. He interested her fundamentally.

3

Now here was a strange thing, thought Hermia. She loved her husband. That was the truth. He was hers. He needed her. She pitied him in his failure, and even sympathised with him in his stupidity. She could not overcome her sense of responsibility towards him.

And when he was unexpectedly kind to her, or when he came somewhere near self-reproach, or when he had one of his rare clients and made a little money and bought her a present as if he had received a windfall (so childish he was), she felt that there was nothing in the world she would not do for him.

At the same time she knew herself to be spiritually completely beyond his reach. It would never have entered her mind to share a subtle or troublous thought with him. She made no demands on his comprehension. She approached him only from the surface.

Nor did he deeply engage her attention. When she was away from him, days could pass without a thought of him entering her consciousness. She could sit at table with him listening in apparent concern to his various plans for what he called gingering-up Gibeon, and give her mind to secret ideas of her own. She could be embraced by him and hardly know it.

During the weeks that passed now, when Saul Nathan was almost daily at their house attending to Naomi, she thought of Saul ceaselessly.

It was not a question of love or anything like that. He simply occupied her brain. He seemed to be embedded in her grey matter, growing there.

In a way, it was not so strange. The man was different from the other people in Gibeon, and so was she. He was introspective, and so was she. He had an artistic sensibility, and so had she.

At the same time, she could not understand him. His race made him mysterious to her. She found, on thinking about it, that she never considered him without reference to his race. She was always wondering: "Now does he say that, does he feel like that, is his candour misleading, does he puzzle me, because he is a Jew?"

She was never sure that she knew exactly what was in his mind. He would speak to her with apparent frankness, with a kind of brotherly frankness, and just below the surface of his words she would sense a

granite wall guarding the real man. Was that the wall of race? And then, again, he would be so unreserved that she could not credit it. And what did that mean?

She would look into his dark-grey eyes, small and deep-set, above protruding knobs of cheek-bones, and she would try to read them. They met hers fairly, with an inexplicable melancholy in them, and held her steadily until her heart gave a sudden movement and she had to abandon her silent inquiry.

She felt all the time that there was something she wanted to know about him. She kept thinking: "I must see him and find out." What it was she had to find out she could not discover to herself. Was it his attitude towards her? That, in part. And yet, not entirely. She had a longing—it was really a passionate longing—to get at the hidden man in him.

It was not the first time she had had this feeling about any man. It had happened to her quite often. A dozen men had excited a similar curiosity in her, and the curiosity had subsided without being satisfied—sometimes, even, without wanting to be satisfied—and the affair was ended.

And at root, of course, it was a sexual craving, for she did not experience this particular kind of curiosity about women, nor wonder so deeply what they thought about her, nor long to explain herself to them, but yet it was not physical. She did not want contact. Quite often a message satisfied her as much as a meeting. And, on those occasions when the obsession did come to her that she must meet the man who at the moment engaged her interest—so strong an obsession that it

actually gave her pain—no sooner had she done so than she was assuaged. He might go now. She had what, for the time being, she needed.

No, certainly this was not love according to the poets. She might think continuously about a man, and try to understand him and to open her thoughts to him, but she was not concerned about his happiness. She did not sorrow if he was ill or unsuccessful. She was not prepared to sacrifice more for him than for any other person. She had not the least desire to live beside him or share with him. Such an idea, indeed, would have been distasteful to her.

What she wanted was to brood over this man; to probe and probe the things he said to her—their ultimate meaning in relation to herself, himself, the world; to interest him fiercely (call it love or not, she didn't care), so that what she did and said—even if it concerned her husband—had a meaning for him. And that was all.

She wondered sometimes if she had this spiritually sexual need because Arnold was no inner mate to her, because she despised him mentally. She was thus a woman divided in two, each part making a different kind of demand. And the two parts could only live in complete harmony with one another when they were separately satisfied.

But, finally, she always returned to this strange fact: she might think about another man a hundred times as often as about Arnold, but it was for Arnold she planned and suffered, it was Arnold she saw as the companion of all her life, it was Arnold to whom she belonged.

4

Nevertheless no man had ever interested her as much as Saul. To begin with, he could, with almost scientific ruthlessnes, open himself out—his inner motives, and yet, at the same time, there was his racial complexity. He had the traditional repressions of forty generations of a distrusted and distrusting people behind him.

He thus gave and withheld almost simultaneously. If he uncovered a secret within himself he ran back, as it were, to snatch it away from curious eyes that he might hide it deeper than ever before, leaving a number of false scents about to defeat renewed curiosity.

Hermia had never met a man she understood less. On the other hand, he seemed to give her the understanding she could get from no one else in Gibeon. And he loved her singing, he had ideas, he enjoyed her confidences, and she enjoyed making them.

CHAPTER IX

I

By the time Naomi was well again Hermia and Saul were friends, and Duerden, too, could not but like a man who had, with such intimate concern, helped his child to recovery. If he thought of him as a Jew it was only to wonder that so decent a fellow should belong to this impossible race. Saul was really no different, when one got to know him, from himself or any other man in Gibeon. So Duerden thought.

Saul, who knew that he had passed with Duerden the test which is set the Jew before he is admitted as a man—that test which is reserved for him peculiarly since he is under suspicion and yet, on the face of it, more capable of absorption than the member of any other excluded race—Saul was ironically touched and amused. Poor, simple Duerden! He believed that Saul Nathan was a man just like Arnold Duerden. He could not see that Saul Nathan was two men. One of him lived among the people in the big world, and had their interests and their conventions, and even their thoughts and traditions and standards and prejudices. And the other lived in a little ghetto, and suffered and enjoyed with his own, and looked out on the big world, and himself in it, with shame and amusement and satisfaction and sorrow and contempt. That really doubled his life. It made it peculiarly rich. Even the resentments lent it colour.

He expressed something of the kind to his father, told him, half-pleased, half-ironical, about Duerden's sudden friendship for him. "Every anti-Semite has his favourite Jew," said Old Nathan, "of whom he says: 'This one is different from the rest. I will take him to myself.' Sometimes that gives the Jew pleasure. He is happy not to look or seem like his brothers, because it is not what a person can call a fashionable thing to look like a Jew, and you know for yourself, Saul, we all want to be fashionable."

Saul passed his eyes over his father, and smiled. His father, realising how incongruous the words "We all want to be fashionable" must sound from his lips, smiled too, but he went on speaking:

"It is, besides, an achievement, a triumph, for a Jew to be accepted as an equal by those who have hitherto despised him, even when, in his secret heart, he despises them—though what right he has to do so, often, I don't know. . . . Only here he comes to his last trouble."

Old Nathan paused rhetorically. His son waited for him to continue.

"You don't know Hebrew," said Old Nathan. "So get me an English Bible from the shop, and I will read you something. The Bibles are next to the patent medicines."

"On purpose?" asked Saul.

"You mean the Bible is a patent medicine for the soul. No, no. I believe in the Bible, Saul. I have not found more sense in any other book except Shakespeare."

Saul brought him a Bible, and Old Nathan dropped to his eyes the spectacles that lay on his high forehead,

and found a passage in Esther. "'Think not,'" he read, "'that thou shalt escape in the King's house, more than all the other Jews.'"

He put down the Bible, and looked up at his son from over his spectacles.

"A Jew stays a Jew, Saul."

2

Well, that might be so. In the meantime, Duerden was offering Saul his friendship in the way he knew best, and Saul was taking it with a conscience that was not happy. He wished he could accept simply what was simply offered without regarding himself, on one side, and Duerden, on the other, as racial repositories. How terrible, how—in a way—inferior always to look before and after.

Duerden invited Saul to join his tennis club which played on the Gibeon public courts, but to which no other Jews belonged, he suggested that he should stand for the Gibeon Club itself, and he made what he thought were tactful and subtle references to the Vigilance Association. He delicately avoided the word "Jew" because that was a term which, like "Kaffir," he regarded as an insult. It was one of those things which were true, but whose descriptions were too strong for their meaning.

Saul, of course, understood perfectly that Duerden was offering him an escape from what he considered the undesirable society of his fellow-Jews in Gibeon. And, in fact, Saul himself wanted that. They were not in his grade as human beings, any more than the

local Indians were, by birth, training or material success, satisfactory associates for Dadabhai.

Saul looked at Duerden's red-brown face, and it struck him, for the first time, that to Duerden Jews were simply Jews. They were not to be distinguished by class, as Englishmen or Frenchmen might be distinguished by class.

And he thought to himself that the most powerful thing in the world, after all, was class. Race wasn't in it. Principle wasn't in it. Religion wasn't in it. When once a war was over the gentleman on one side met the gentleman on the other side and ignored the groundling soldier who had followed him in battle. And, outside his politics, the well-born Labourite dined with his Tory friend, and not with the plumber who voted as he did. And, putting aside his sermon, the clergyman foregathered with his college-companion, the atheist, and not with the farm-hand who was his parishioner. . . .

But to be a member of an excluded race had, in itself, the effect of belonging to a class. So that to Jews themselves all Jews were alike, and a Jew could only be differentiated from other Jews when he ceased to comport himself as a Jew.

How, then, could he blame Duerden?

Saul had seen the tennis at the public courts at Gibeon. Although, nominally, any person who had paid his subscription had the right to play there whenever the courts were free, it happened, by tacit agreement, that the Jews played on certain days and the members of Duerden's club played there on other days. And, as for the Gibeon Club, no Jew dared to have himself put up unless it was generally accepted that

he had passed the test which is the Jew's special preliminary barrier.

It was really, therefore, a touching demonstration on Duerden's part to ask Saul to join his clubs, and, for a moment, Saul was grateful to him. But then a new feeling grew in him. To his surprise, a rage of resentment possessed him. He hated himself for being pleased to be treated as an equal by this red-faced fool. He hated both himself and Duerden for smugly, if tacitly, combining to thrust his race to a level below their own.

He said, in a tone of voice Duerden could not understand: "I am not going to be here long enough to make it worth my while to join any clubs." And he added, quite abruptly: "Well, thanks, Duerden. Goodnight."

3

But yet he had hardly got home when he was filled with resentment that he belonged to a race that so hampered simplicity of progress.

Old Nathan, seeing him moody, asked him, after a time, what sort of day he had had. "No particular sort of day," began Saul negligently, and went on, after all, to distinguish it. "Duerden asked me to stand for the Gibeon Club and his tennis club, and I refused."

"Why?"

When Saul discussed any controversial subject with his father he always spoke, whatever he felt, on the devil's side. He loved the old man, but he could not bring himself to agree with him. Something in him

would have felt betrayed: perhaps the spirit of his generation.

He would not, therefore, give Old Nathan the satisfaction of knowing that racial partisanship had prompted him to refuse Duerden. He merely said:

"I told him I wasn't staying long enough to make it worth bothering about."

Old Nathan made no remark for a few moments. Then he commented in a dry voice:

"It would also perhaps be risky. You might be rejected."

"I wouldn't be rejected," said Saul with hostile pride.

"Who can tell? And I don't know you yet, Saul. Are you strong enough to become more strong because you are despised? Contempt is a bad thing only for the weak. . . . There are some who go down when they are kicked, and there are some who go on." . . .

He sat looking at his son, his dark-blue eyes under his large, overshadowing brow narrowed in contemplation. And he thought how nations had grown from the roots of a humiliation, and how principles and parties had sprung up from the vengeance of a shame.

And he remembered having heard somewhere that a Boer had once been black-balled by the Englishmen of a South African club, and that now this man was among the Nationalists helping to lead his people away from England.

And who could tell, he pondered, but that such an incident was stronger than a war to create enemies, since it was worse for a man to bleed in his spirit than in his body, since a slap in the face with a glove was longer remembered than a felling to earth by a

fist. If one day, he thought, South Africa should break away from England, the cause would not be a great axe whose chopping any man could see, but only, perhaps, a little worm of an indignity leaving a trail of rot as it ate and ate its way out. . . .

He told Saul the story of the black-balled Boer, and also some of the things he had been thinking. But he could not, as he would have liked, lure Saul to any discussion of the matter. Saul said merely:

"I suppose you are right, father."

It would never have entered Old Nathan's mind to want to belong to any club. He had not been born to such things. But it pained him that his son, who had, should be able neither to accept nor reject without bitterness.

"Well, after all, what harm would it do to stand?" he said. "There is no meaning to it if a Jew is refused anywhere. Jesus Christ also would not get in the Gibeon Club today.

"He would not wish to get in," said Saul gloomily. "That's where the Jew fails. He wishes to get in."

"A human being is a human being," said Old Nathan. "You must not expect him to be a God."

"It's terrible to be so unwanted," said Saul, and made his father feel that he was once more a little boy, and not a man who had the power sometimes to embarrass him.

In the end, even when Duerden suggested it again, Saul refused to consider the matter of being put up for his clubs.

"No, really, I don't feel the need of a club," he said, and showed himself, by this declaration, a stranger

being than ever to Duerden, who answered in a puzzled voice: "That settles it, of course."

4

Nevertheless, Duerden, having, during the time of Naomi's illness, made his decision about Saul's merits, had now a heavy attachment for him. It manifested itself in a persistent desire for his company and an enthusiastic commendation of his medical capacity.

This commendation had definite results for Saul. He developed quite soon a good practice in Gibeon, and he made an enemy of Dr. Diethelm.

A number of Dr. Diethelm's patients now went to Saul, and when Dr. Diethelm passed him in the street he gave him a greeting which was hardly more than a balefully aware look from under his bushy brows, and he never now came to play chess with Old Nathan.

He had, indeed, not entered the little room behind the shop since Saul's arrival in Gibeon. Very few things happened in these days which did not increase Dr. Diethelm's sense of the world's enmity towards him, and his enmity towards the world. He hated the English because his son had fought for them, and they had outraged his son's father. He hated the Germans because they had killed his son. He hated Old Nathan because he was happy in Saul's return. He hated Saul because he was his professional rival, and not, as his own son would have been, his partner. He hated Dr. Tetyana because the poor whites went to him. He hated the Kaffirs on the Heights, the

Vigilants in the town, the stupid inhabitants of Gibeon, even his own patients.

There were some who believed in his powers on account of his very rudeness to them, but many left him to go to Saul. Dr. Diethelm sat in his room, a medical paper open before him on which he could not concentrate, and his pain found no outlet.

Three times a day he went to the Phœnix Hotel for meals. He had a small table to himself; indicated by a few words what he wanted to eat; read a newspaper while he satisfied his hunger; and then, lighting a cigar and taking his hat from its peg, he walked, with barely an acknowledgment of the people he encountered, back to his dingy home.

Old Nathan, sorry for him, had once or twice considered going to Dr. Diethelm's to try to induce him to play chess again. But the indolence which was responsible for his being in Gibeon at all, and in this unintelligent little business on which he existed, prevented him. He said to himself, in the night, as he lay in bed: "Tomorrow I will go to Diethelm." But tomorrow arrived and he couldn't bring himself to do it. And the weeks became months, and the two old men, who had met so regularly over a game and a cup of tea, were deprived of their only diversion and the something like friendship that joined their lonely lives.

CHAPTER X

I

Saul, too, would have been lonely if it had not been for Hermia Duerden. His refusal to join Duerden's clubs or the Vigilants had had the effect of shutting him off from the recreations of Gibeon. Whenever, now, he wanted solace or companionship, his thoughts turned to Hermia. He sat in her rather untidy, attractive room, listening to her singing, or, with equal pleasure, to her clear, decided speaking. Because Hermia was curious about him, and wanted to get at something—she did not know what—in him, she was always evocative. But yet, not slyly evocative. She did not try to make herself alluring. If anything, she kept aloof—that was always her way—from the light sexual chat, the significant badinage, in which men and women frequently indulge. She and Saul did not talk as man and woman. . . .

And yet, when they talked, they felt as man and woman. Whatever aspect of life they might choose to discuss—the very furthest from sex—it was still sex that coloured it.

At the same time Hermia was personal and very direct. She asked Saul what he thought and felt and believed, what he had experienced and what he hoped. She told him things about himself. There were a good many people who found Hermia very attractive because she was so personal. It made them feel inter-

esting. And she knew it, and, although she really had this passionate curiosity about almost everything, she manifested it also, to a certain extent, deliberately.

She had long ago discovered that one could exercise a great charm by merely being intimately inquisitive. It was pathetic, the way people opened themselves out for inspection—they loved so to have a meaning for someone else. They could even bear it when the talk was about their disagreeable characteristics. They preferred that to not being discussed at all. The most dour men and women, Hermia had found, were eager to reveal themselves. It was, in practice, really the height of good manners to be personal.

She was quite ready to talk about herself too. "Now isn't it strange," she would say, "how different in this respect you and I are. You are like this" (she would enter into a direct exposition) "and I am like this."

Saul found himself coming to her with a kind of quivering eagerness to be probed and exhibited.

But sometimes he realised this quivering eagerness in himself, and it frightened him. Then, for a week perhaps, he would not come near Hermia. And Hermia, wondering, and therefore the more interested, would not yield the power she knew she had by making a sign. She would wait for him, and think of what she would say when he came, and be altogether preoccupied with him, but she would not call him to her.

And, occasionally, chance would throw them together again—chance not always unassisted by both of them—but generally he returned to her because he found it intolerable to stay away any longer.

2

In the intervals when he put restraint on himself he was lonely, and once, in a period of such loneliness, he strolled into Dr. Tetyana's waiting-room, and sat down, as man to man, to talk to the Kaffir.

It was the first time any doctor in Gibeon had done such a thing. And Tetyana, indeed, would have preferred it if it had not been a Jew, for a Jew had not the same standing as another European of his own kind. (And, for that matter, a Boer, through old tradition, had not, with the Kaffirs, the same standing as an Englishman.) And so it did not have as much meaning if a Jew came as if an Englishman had come. Still, a white skin was a white skin, and a painful exhilaration mounted in Tetyana when Saul walked into his room.

He tried not to show it. He told himself that he was as good a doctor as Saul, that he had attended a Scotch university, had been received in Scotch homes, had worked—was working now—among white people. He even made a fleeting mental reference to his father, a minor chief, and to the old warriors of his tribe. But he sneered at himself at the mere thought. His father might be a chief, but he was still a savage. His tribesmen might be descendants of warriors, but they were themselves houseboys.

No, he could take pride only in his own achievements. And they were, relatively speaking, great. For a Kaffir had to go a further distance towards his goal than a European. And then he had to fight for release before he started, and he had to fight one thing and another all the way to the end.

And thus Tetyana had done more than Saul, and he knew it. But yet the very fact that he had so far to go placed him, in his origin, as inferior to a man to whom Nature had been kinder. For the shorter distance a man has to cover to attain his objective, the better he clearly is in his beginnings. The best people are those who have no distance at all to go—they are born winners. And beauty, genius, and social place are alike respected according to the fewness of the pains they have cost.

Tetyana, try as he would, could not feel himself Saul's equal. Where Saul did not need to impress him, he was compelled to try to impress Saul. He had to show that he was as good as Saul. And the necessity of this showing immediately made him less good.

He thus explained his origin and achievements to Saul, exhibited to him his instruments and books, and mentioned one or two extraordinary cases he had successfully treated.

Saul, understanding what moved Tetyana to this persistent self-explanation, was so sympathetic with him that the Kaffir's heart overflowed. He offered to do this and that for him, he offered finally to take him to the camp of the Levites on the Heights of Gibeon.

"I attend to them," he told Saul. "And no European has been there. But I shall take you. It will be all right if I take you. I can do anything with those people."

3

Tetyana was really a more lonely man than Saul. He was the loneliest man in Gibeon.

He was of middle height, brown rather than black,

with hair brushed until his natural peppercorns were straightened into a massed woolly smoothness. He had an oval face, a mouth not very thick-lipped, magnificent teeth, large melancholy eyes. He was a Basuto. He belonged, that is, to a nation not as aristocratic as the Zulus, but with more brains.

While he was in Edinburgh he had felt, with misery, and also with a trace of pride, as if he were an exhibit released from a Barnum show. The combination of misery and pride, the embarrassment of being so noticeably different from everybody else, had given him then a defiant swagger which, in its essence, was pathetic.

But, immediately on his return to South Africa, he had lost that swagger. In South Africa a Kaffir was not a specimen, he was simply a Kaffir. And that he was a doctor on top of it made him merely ludicrous even to the poor whites who called him in because they had the idea that he might know a little kraal witchcraft as well as the teachings of a European university.

To the Kaffirs again he was no longer, although they denied this to one another, quite as they were. And, certainly, to himself, he was no longer quite as they were. The world of civilisation lay between them, a dozen centuries lay between them. What could he talk about to the dwellers in the mud-and-reed huts? Only now and then, when he attended some native congress, could he release his mind and speech from their enforced restrictions. And even then, at these congresses, there were too many parsons and teachers, and they were timid and conventional, and full of a religion he had lost in the dissecting-rooms.

Nor was there any woman with whom he could associate. The Kaffir women bore civilisation worse than the men. They even lost their native gracefulness when they wore European clothes. So might, perhaps, the Greek goddesses. Still, here it was. The Kaffir women, unlike their men, looked thickset and clumsy in the dress of the twentieth century.

Tetyana saw no possibility of marriage before him, and there were times when he contemplated a life of eternal celibacy.

Sometimes he thought of going to America. In America he would meet others of his own kind, join them, have a fuller existence. But he was at home in South Africa, he was established here in Gibeon. He could not bring himself to leave the sun and mountains and spaces for a life urgent with human beings. There had been times in Edinburgh when he had felt he would die for lack of freedom.

And so he spent his days in solitude, and gave himself up to his work.

He was a moderately good doctor in a painstaking kind of way. He was seldom inspired to brilliant diagnosis or treatment. But no work was too much for him. He was endlessly patient. And, finally, he understood his people.

4

He promised to take Saul to the Heights in a few days' time. "I had better mention it to Aaron first," he said.

When Tetyana, having duly made the arrangements with Aaron, escorted Saul to his car, which was in a

garage a few blocks away, there was a sensation created, not only in the streets of Gibeon, but also within themselves. Tetyana might attend to a poor white patient, he might sit talking with Saul in his consulting-room, he might *stand* with him in a public place, but to *walk* with him was something entirely different. There was a whole world of social distinction, somehow, between walking and standing. Was it because to stand had a more accidental character than to walk? The fact remained that Saul had never before accompanied a native down a street, and he could not do so now without self-consciousness. Nor could Tetyana subdue the angry triumph that rose in him as they accomplished their deed.

He had escorted white girls in Edinburgh, and he had seen people turning around to look at him, and he had imagined them saying: "Look, look, at the nigger," but that had not been so significant an experience as his journey of a few hundred yards through the streets of a little town in the Union of South Africa.

As they passed the Phœnix Hotel people, eating in the dining-room, looked through the windows on to the street, and commented on the event to their friends. And Dr. Diethelm, at his little private table, raised his eyes over the top of his newspaper, stared from under his aggressive, twitching eyebrows—simply stared, and then, when they were past, returned with a flushed face to his reading. The two of them, who were taking his last consolation from him: his work; the two of them—together. . . .

Saul and Tetyana sat in the motor-car trying to act as if it were not a remarkable thing that they should

have any sort of community. They made an effort to talk, negligently, as man to man. They could not, for a moment, forget the colour of their skins.

The car turned out of the village, and towards the Heights. The Heights were a line of wavy hills, dipping here and there into nothing. Through the furthest dips hills in the distance showed a deep blue, but through the nearer dips the veld rose and sank in its winter colours of faded amethyst and burnt-out yellow, pallid, barren, desolate. The great emptiness was accentuated by isolated bushes and trees, and the sun was very bright.

The Heights themselves looked as if grey veils had been thrown over them to shroud their dead pinks and mauves and browns and blues and greens, and here and there, it seemed as though the shadows of the clouds had torn these delicate veils to reveal great, jagged, dark holes.

Towards one of the hills their road led, and, at the end of the road, stood the two big, whitened stones carrying the notices in Zulu and Sesuto and English and Afrikaans—the Kaffir languages on the left-hand stone, and the European languages on the right-hand stone: "Halt! No admittance."

Before each stone a black sentry, clad in a white smock-like garment, sat on a horse. They were proud and self-conscious; and they saluted the men in the car as they had been taught to salute when, during the Great European War, they had gone to France in the Labour Contingent; and they gave them the word to pass.

The Levite camp consisted of a large number of reed-and-mud huts, made in the shape of hives, and

of stone-fenced cattlefolds. The tabernacle was a plain, rectangular building of unburnt brick, plastered over with mud. It was very ugly. In front of the tabernacle, but slightly to one side, stood two poles, joined, at the top, by a bar from which was suspended a hook. On this spot the bellowing animals were accurately stabbed by an experienced slaughterman, and were then hung up to be skinned and divided. These animals were first offered as sacrifices to God, and afterwards they were eaten by the congregation. An ox hung there as Saul and Tetyana passed, and men were working on its carcase.

From the tabernacle Aaron came out to meet them. He was dressed in his scarlet robe. He offered them his hand with dignity, and yet, Saul felt, like an exhilarated actor. It was the first time a black man had taken the initiative, with Saul, in the matter of handshaking.

Aaron led his visitors into his hut, which was beside the tabernacle. And he spoke to Saul—but hardly to Tetyana, because Saul was the man he wanted to impress—about America and Europe and political parties in South Africa and the native vote, but not about religion. The man was, it seemed to Saul, a politician rather than a religious leader. Or perhaps he wanted to show himself as a man of the world.

Finally Tetyana told him that the Gibeon magistrate was complaining because the Levites had not come to register the births and deaths that were taking place in their large community.

To Saul's surprise, Aaron responded calmly: "God does not approve of registration. He counts his children in Heaven."

Was Aaron speaking seriously now? Or was he deliberately making an objection that could not be answered in a civilised sense? Saul listened, with a feeling of revelation, to the two Kaffirs talking to one another in English, one with a Scotch accent and the other with an American accent, yet with an African something in both their voices.

"But I must write out death certificates, you know," said Tetyana. "I think you could obey the law to this small extent without hurting your conscience."

"Do we harm anyone? Are we behaving evilly in any respect? Are we not virtuous and peaceful?"

"I know you're all right," said Tetyana. "But if I must tell you the truth, Aaron, the white people are more doubtful. They talk about your sacrifices, and they say, 'Where do you get the cattle from?' and whenever a farmer loses a sheep or an ox he thinks the Levites have been at it."

"Have you seen our kraals?" asked Aaron. "Come. Let me show you."

The kraals were full of the cattle the Levites had brought with them—Kaffir cattle, as anyone could see who knew how Kaffir crops and animals were alike scrubby and ill-grown.

"All our possessions are here," said Aaron.

"But how long do you intend to stay?"

"It is the Sabbath year."

"A year, then?"

Aaron did not answer. Even he dared not directly mention so long a period.

Saul looked about him. A native woman was sitting in the sun, in front of her hut, washing her fat, shiny, black baby. She sucked up clean, cold water from

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an earthenware jar, and, heating it in her mouth, squirted it on the child, and thus washed him. Other children, older, and, in consequence, untended and dirty, and with white scurf on their heads, and big sore eyes, and protruding navels, were running about naked in the midday warmth. A man was squatting on his haunches while another shaved his head.

"Why is he having his head shaved?" Saul asked Tetyana.

"He may have had a death in his family," Tetyana told him.

Everywhere in the yellow dust black men and women and children were wandering about in idleness. It was a gloriously indolent existence, made exciting and romantic by its religious meaning. Who would not be a Levite? thought Saul.

Aaron escorted his guests back to the whitened stones.

"Be careful, Aaron," Tetyana warned him, as he stepped into his motor-car. "The temper of the people in Gibeon is not good. The Vigilants are determined to get you away. The Government is uneasy. You have been here three months now. I wonder it has been allowed so long. I advise you to be careful."

Aaron smiled with hauteur.

"We are waiting for Jehovah. We are his chosen people. We take our commands from the Lord. He will tell us if we are to fulfil our Sabbath year on the Heights."

CHAPTER XI

I

It was true that the Gibeonites lay uneasily beneath the shadow of the Heights. Not only the physical fact of the large black community hanging over them—the threat of what Old Nathan metaphorically called the kerrie and assegai—was alarming, there was also the spiritual fact that they were not recognising white authority. The very calmness with which the Levites went on living week after week, and month after month, in their religious laager when they knew their presence was objectionable—this mere decent placidity was cause for perturbation. It carried an air so set and assured. There was something so menacing about it. What can one do against Quiet? It is the characteristic of gods and fools, both equally incomprehensible and immovable.

The Vigilance Association went in deputation to the magistrate and wrote a letter to the Government. Arnold Duerden told the magistrate that if the Government refused to move the Levites, the Vigilants would do so.

"There are two and a half thousand of them," the magistrate pointed out.

"We'll call up the countryside," declared Duerden.

"And do what?"

"What do you expect?"

"Nothing," thought the magistrate to himself. "You are bluffing, my friend."

But still he was uneasy. He was continually hearing of trouble. Whenever a farmer lost a beast, he laid the blame on the Levites. The traders declared that the Vigilants were terrorising both them and their potential customers. They were afraid to do business with a black face. The Indians protested that pickets were preventing, not only Kaffirs, but also Europeans, from dealing with them. Householders complained that their servants had a way of suddenly departing. Timid natives from the locations around Gibeon said that their children were being lured from them by the burnt offerings that became orgies of eating, and by the kisses of peace which might have Heaven knew what results. There was talk everywhere of the fomenting of an anti-white agitation.

Rumblings and flashes. The magistrate feared a storm.

He went to the camp with the Chief of Police, and Aaron received the two men smoothly, and promised to leave at the end of a month.

When next the magistrate met Duerden, he told him that there was no further cause to worry. The Levites were going.

"I'll believe it when I see it," said Duerden, and, secretly, the magistrate agreed with him.

Now a meeting of the Vigilance Association was called, and it was decided that Duerden should instruct the members in the science of defence and attack. It was also suggested at this meeting that Tetyana was probably stiffening the Levites in their resistance. "He has free access to them," a member pointed out. "And

he is a man with no respect for a white skin. Why should he have any respect? He is allowed to attend to white women."

This was a matter which, for a long time now, had been agitating the inhabitants of Gibeon. They had not, in the first instance, liked the idea of Tetyana's going to Edinburgh to study medicine and coming back in the pride of his professional status. It wasn't, they held, a nigger's business to have a particular education, the power of it and the arrogance. He ought not to know more than even the lowest white.

There were nearly as many people in Gibeon of English as of Dutch descent, but on the subject of colour they thought alike: "Cursed be Canaan. A servant of servants shall he be to his brethren. . . . God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem, and Canaan shall be his servant."

That defined their attitude towards a white skin. Without necessarily being religious, they felt there were certain things Nature had ordained for the dark-skinned. And to attend universities, and to wear good clothes, and to ride in motor-cars, and to practise a profession, and to look a white man level in the eye, and to speak to him as an equal, were not among such things.

Nevertheless, what could they do when Tetyana put up his plate in Gibeon? They hadn't the legal machinery to stop him, they could not by force drive him out. And, certainly, they never dreamt that he would find patients among other than natives.

Even this the white doctors in Gibeon did not like. But they had to bear it.

When, however, the superstitious poor whites of

Gibeon, the social refuse of the land, began to turn in the direction of Dr. Tetyana's consulting-room, there was a new aspect to consider. Should white women be allowed to go to Dr. Tetyana?

Yet what could prevent them?

The poor white patients of Dr. Tetyana assumed an ugly importance. And the patients themselves, simply because he was black and therefore merit in him was a startling thing, believed in him slavishly.

So does a native look outrageously well-dressed in the discarded but still decent clothes of a European. For it is strange that he should wear decent clothes at all.

2

It had not before struck the Vigilance Association that Tetyana might be inspiring the Levites to obstinacy. But now it seemed the most likely thing in the world. Apart from the fact that they were a huge monopoly of patients to him, how could they expect a Kaffir to regard the commands of white people with adequate awe when white people—and especially white women—came to him in the physical humiliation of sickness?

"And not only," one of the members added, "does he attend European patients, but he operates on them in hospital, and white nurses have to stand up when he comes in, and to take their orders from him."

Tetyana's position in Gibeon seemed to them suddenly an intolerable thing. "We'll see about all that," said Duerden menacingly, exhilarated because there was something definite the Vigilance Association could do.

3

So suddenly there was a scandal throughout the Union of South Africa. Hermia Duerden could add something to her newspaper messages about the Levites. She had not, for years, had so much to write about.

The white nurses at the Gibeon Hospital, instigated by the Vigilance Association, were on strike. They would not take orders from a Kaffir. They would attend to their other patients, but they would have nothing to do with the patients of Dr. Tetyana.

They were upheld in their attitude by the applause of Gibeon and the approbation of the country. The hospital committee asked Tetyana to be good enough not to send white patients to the hospital. Tetyana insisted on his right to do so, and threatened to sue the hospital for damages. Saul supported him. The hospital finally granted the privilege, but it was understood that Tetyana was not to avail himself of his power.

"I admire you for standing by Tetyana," Hermia told Saul. "You have principles and courage."

She watched for it, and saw the red spreading over his face, calling up the colour he had there, and running away with it, so that now he was very pale.

After so much opposition as he had encountered owing to his association with Tetyana, Hermia's words agitated Saul.

"I am glad you think so," he said in a dry voice. "I need your help."

She waited for him to say something more. Exhilaration was racing through her.

"I never do anything," he added, "without wondering what you will feel about it."

They sat looking at one another in silence. The excitement that was inflaming the little town because on the hills behind it a horde of black beings were resting in God's promise to appear to them, had reached also this man and woman.

"Do you remember," continued Saul again, "the first time we met? It was the day I came to see your husband about the Vigilants. I had not decided at the time whether I would join or not. I didn't like the idea. But I didn't want to be out of things in Gibeon. I had just arrived. I would have preferred to be popular in the town."

"Now you are not popular," said Hermia.

"Now I have the Jews and the Indians with me, but the other people distrust me. And you are my only friend—unless your husband is another. He has been —considering his instinctive outlook on things—very good to me."

She saw the emotional movement in his throat. And, although she was deliberately examining him all the time and triumphing in his avowals, she was barely less agitated than he.

"On the day I came," went on Saul, "you told me you were utterly against the Vigilants. I remember your words exactly" (he remembered her words, Hermia noted). "You said 'Your act of tilting at windmills makes the windmills.' And you told me you and Arnold were having continual disputes about the Vigilance Association. And I thought then that I would like to agree with you where your husband did not—that I . . ." He paused a moment. "Well, you

see the competitive sort of spirit I have against husbands."

He smiled suddenly, but the atmosphere did not lighten.

"But then," said Hermia, "when I asked you to account for Arnold's failure as a lawyer, you withdrew into yourself."

"I had known you only a few minutes."

"And you distrusted my unreserve?"

"Perhaps I did. But afterwards I longed for it, and tried to win it back again. That was why I didn't join the Vigilants. The principles you praise in me are your own."

"But you suffer for them."

"Not if I please you."

She spoke to him as if she were merely interested in knowing. She looked at him with a direct interest which seemed almost scientific. Her manner made it possible for them to say anything they chose.

"Does pleasing me," she asked, "outweigh the animosity of all the people in Gibeon?"

"Yes, it does," answered Saul.

"I am very glad," she said with unembarrassed seriousness. And went on, in a way that made him rear back spiritually at the sudden restraint, to discuss the attitude of the people of Gibeon towards Dr. Tetyana, and the position the nurses at the hospital had taken up.

She had calmly, as was her way, moved the talk from the personal to the impersonal. Saul replied shortly, stemmed and choked. He went home restless and unsatisfied. But Hermia was happy. She was not lightly happy. She was deeply, religiously happy. Something in her was assuaged. She lay awake all

night remembering Saul's words, the movement of his throat, the reddening and paling of his face. She visualized their future meetings—other things he would feel and say. Her husband kissed her, and she liked his strong arms about her, and responded affectionately to his embrace. She was, in the manner of women—not vampires, but just good and pleasant women—she was kind to her husband because another man had warmed her heart.

4

When Saul and Hermia met again they did not refer to what had happened before, but they were conscious of it, it bound them, it made them glad to be together, it gave them a sense of great friendliness.

They played tennis, went for walks and for long drives into the country. Of these things Hermia always told Duerden, and he approved heartily, and so did Old Nathan, who did not want his son to be lonely.

He was, in many ways, an innocent old man, and he regarded Mrs. Duerden, whom he liked very much, as a haven for Saul. He was glad Saul visited Mrs. Duerden rather than the silly and undeveloped young daughters of the farmers about Gibeon. It pleased him that Saul had the taste to admire an interesting woman. And the fact that she was married made it all seem very homely and safe to Old Nathan.

And so it was, in a way, safe. Hermia belonged to those women, commonly held in disparagement by modern writers of fiction as takers but not givers—the giving, in this case, having simply a bodily meaning.

Yet she had as much to offer as she wanted in return.

She took the keenest interest in Saul. The very fact that her opinion concerned him deeply made it so. She gave herself pains to please him because she had a passionate desire for his admiration. Since he was her constant problem, she enveloped him in her thoughts, and he was ripened in their warmth. He had her time, her friendship, her inspiration, glad meetings with her. She put a meaning into his life in Gibeon which, without her, would have been the dullest patch in the pattern of his being. What happened finally was not her fault—unless, indeed, everything could be traced back to her words at their very first encounter.

Their friendship came to a point at which it could have stayed even although there was often a profound uneasiness in Saul's blood, for he cherished this very uneasiness. That it did not do so, did not stay, was due to Dr. Diethelm.

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CHAPTER XII

I

It was extraordinary how Dr. Diethelm, starting away with hatred of such things as he could associate with his son's death and his own unhappiness, had finally concentrated that hatred on the two men furthest away from the root of its cause. The people against whom all his heart moved now were Saul, a man of no inherited land and little national feeling, and Tetyana, a racial outcast.

Now Dr. Diethelm encouraged in his heart the Vigilance Association, a body grounded in the principles of patriotic assertion; he spurred them on spiritually in their campaign against Tetyana; he felt inimical, not towards Duerden, the very embodiment of this assertion, but towards Saul Nathan, who stood against it.

He often wondered to himself how it had happened. Why did the poison in him overflow at sight or thought of Saul or Tetyana? What had they done to him except deprive him, by reason, not of deliberate intention, but merely of accidental presence, of some of his patients? Had his majestic bitterness so narrowed itself into a little channel of personal jealousy? Was the spiritual enlargement of a sorrow over great things shrunken to so mean a dimension as a matter of professional pique?

How shabbily human emotion could manifest itself! He had seen quite recently a man about to undergo a

dangerous, and almost certainly fatal, operation—and he did, indeed, die of it—he had seen this man scolding his agonised wife in a voice of venom, while his baleful eyes searched her with an unbearable distaste, because she had not contrived that the buttons on his pyjamas should match.

Dr. Diethelm told himself daily, and many times daily, that Saul and Tetyana were guiltless towards him, that Duerden and his Vigilants even now had not sloughed off their war-feelings, but he could not see the two young doctors without a rising of his gorge; he wanted to be leagued with the Vigilants against them.

Other people in Gibeon had not failed to notice that Hermia and Saul were much in one another's company, and the fact interested them or it amused them. But it did not make them angry. It did make Dr. Diethelm angry—perhaps because he was always angry.

And when he saw Saul and Hermia together he barely touched his hat with his heavy fingers, and he looked at them from under his heavy brows, and he grunted an unintelligible greeting in his heavy voice.

But then, one day, as he was returning towards evening from a call in the country, he came upon them, some miles out of Gibeon, standing beside Saul's car, smoking cigarettes and laughing. And he stared at them with a malice of contempt, and passed by without any sort of salutation.

And, although they went on smoking and laughing for a while, to show themselves and one another that his attitude had no meaning at all, they were not comfortable as they drove back. Twenty times Hermia wanted to say, with her usual openness: "Did you notice Dr. Diethelm? He thinks there is something

wrong between us," but today she dared not be frank. And Saul, for his part, was pricked by the fear that the situation was not as innocent as they both pretended it to be.

He put it to himself that if Hermia had been an unmarried girl, and if he had spent so much time with her, and said the things he did say to Hermia, there would certainly, by now, have been a definite meaning attached to his conduct. He would have been held to have intentions.

Had he no intentions in regard to Hermia? Did one ever in life do anything with the idea that here was a sterile deed which would beget no further deeds? When he and Hermia met to talk or to play, were their words, their games, an end in themselves? Did not these words and games hold something besides their own accomplishment?

What then was to happen between him and Hermia?

He had been brought up, like most men of his generation, on imaginative works that stressed the inevitably physical outcome of a passionate sexual interest. But he had often wondered if such an outcome were inevitable. First, there was the devastating inconvenience and awkwardness of an illicit connection. Second, there was the chance of a disastrous discovery and a ribald publicity. By the time such a connection had been thoroughly explored and exploited in gossip, in court-room, in newspaper, it looked as stupid, as ugly and as serious as anything could look. The most abandoned felt disgraced, and the most idealistic vulgarised. The mere fact of seeing a thing as it was in the light of day, without veils and shades, without

glamorous, self-deceptive hocus-pocus, was enough to kill it.

Saul had sometimes thought, in romantic envy, of men who had affairs with married women, he had noticed that there was even a lack of robustness charged against them if they were too delicate in these affairs; but whenever he read of divorce proceedings and hidings and spyings and discoveries, he said to himself: "Yes, this is what it means, after all. It is the æsthetic side that is the trouble."

He had deluded himself, until the baleful light of Dr. Diethelm's eyes had been turned on him, that his association with Hermia was something outside common experience, something exotic and graceful, and, at furthest, just beautifully disturbing. But it struck him now that this was probably how all men and women felt about an irregular attachment until a large public eye glared at them as God at Adam and Eve.

He sat at his wheel, troubled and silent.

But Hermia's mind was following a different course entirely. She thought that if people did not leave them alone she would lose Saul, what she had of him and what she wanted of him—the stimulus of his fundamentally excited interest in her. She knew that she had a disturbing effect on his manhood, and, unless she could arouse this feeling in a man, what meaning had her womanhood? It became nothing but a physical fact, a mere matter of flesh-and-blood construction, a thing unlightened by its essential spirit.

She loved Duerden as if he were herself, and perhaps Duerden loved her in the same way, but what was the use of that? It simply meant that their connection was deprived of any sexual quality. It simply

meant that they received no exhilaration from one another's manhood and womanhood.

This exhilaration had to come from the outside. It had to come, that was what she felt in these days, from Saul.

It was an instinct of sex-preservation. It was also sheer egoism. She was prepared to give in order to arouse Saul's giving, and so, in practice, he did not lose by the transaction. But really it was her own need she was considering, and nothing else. If he had to suffer to vivify her she did not care, and even if, in general, he had a sorrow, it did not affect her as deeply as if her husband had a sorrow, for Duerden here suddenly took on his character as part of herself.

So she wanted to comfort Saul in order that he should not be afraid to remain hers, but then it struck her that the situation might gain in interest if he were brought to a fuller consciousness of it. She was anxious, in a gambling spirit, to see whether realisation would cause him to advance or retreat.

Thus, while he was troubled, not only on a question of passionate loss, but also on a question of conscience and practical outcome, her feelings were concentrated entirely on the question of loss. While he thought of three things, she thought of one. And so, although he cared for her more than she cared for him, it was Hermia who, egoism or not, was the deeper sufferer by reason of the fear that something might come between them.

As they returned to the streets of Gibeon they spoke a few words to one another, but it was for the sake of effect, to make things seemly between them and in the sight of passers-by.

2

The days went on, and Saul did not come to Hermia, and she, anxious to test her power, not out of vanity, but out of fear, made no movement to attract him.

Sometimes she wondered if she had not been mistaken in believing that she was of peculiar concern to him. "You see the competitive sort of spirit I have against husbands?" he had said, but perhaps he did not mean as much by that as she had imagined. Or perhaps, with his Slav face and alien blood, both of which made him mysterious to her, he had meant it at the time, and that was the end of it.

She recalled the triangular hollows beneath his cheekbones; his eyes with their habitually troubled look intensified; his rising and fading colour; and she wished he would come back and tell her more clearly what he felt about her. She was obsessed by the desire that he should do so. And at times she forgot her husband and child even while they were in her presence, but at other times she thought to herself bitterly that she was, after all, of consequence to no one but these two; and she ardently lavished herself on them—in humiliation, in repentance and a terrified snatching at what was definitely substance and not shadow.

Then, because she could not bear the tension any longer, she arranged to visit friends in Johannesburg, and tried to get a few singing engagements.

3

A month passed. And, in the meantime, Saul could not determine whether he had stretched his emotions

to a standstill, and was tired of the very thought of Hermia, or whether, at a word, he was prepared to say to her: "Leave your fool of a husband, and the child that is all Duerden and whom, as you said yourself, you do not love. Leave them, and come to me."

As he revolved this second idea in his mind he sometimes looked at his father's innocent old face, and smiled to himself at the thought of how he could startle him if he chose. The poor old man, ambitious only in respect of his son, was so glad because his friendship with Mrs. Duerden kept him from the temptation of an unsatisfactory entanglement in Gibeon.

Apart from the fact that, in herself, he considered no girl good enough for his son, there was also the racial aspect. Old Nathan might be full of amiability towards all the world, but he wanted no blood except the blood of Israel to mingle with his own. Saul might have, from Heaven knew what century-back aberration, a Slav face, but Old Nathan venerated, almost with superstition, the purity of his race, and would have felt that race betrayed by any offering of half-Nordic children. There was, besides, the feeling that when a Jew married away from his blood he sold himself to the enemy.

But, in his thankfulness that Saul was not in danger of becoming involved with any of the Gibeon girls, it never entered his puritan head that he might become involved with a married woman. About such matters Old Nathan was quite childish. He had, by nature, a disposition which would have delighted St. Paul. He need not to have married to avoid burning. "I would that all men were even as I myself," said St. Paul. But, in fact, Old Nathan was more like St. Paul's

conception of St. Paul than was St. Paul himself. Sex did not trouble him in the least. He had married a wife chosen for him, but he could have lived comfortably a lifelong celibate existence.

He knew, of course, that all people were not made in this mould. He knew there were things called love-affairs and intrigues going on in the world. He knew that the poor whites, for instance, were often promiscuous in their habits. But he was no more agitated by the strange antics of sex than if human beings were flies; he regarded them with a detached indifference.

When, therefore, Saul looked at his father and smiled wryly at his own thoughts, Old Nathan returned his smile with such an untouched innocence that Saul felt a rush of affection for him which was, strangely enough, pitying. "Poor old father," he thought. "So young." And he felt he must be kind to him, protect him, play a game with him.

"Shall we have some chess?" he suggested. And Old Nathan most eagerly brought forth the board and chessmen, and lighted the samovar, and sat musing, and now and then humming a little, over the destinies of the moulded pieces of black and white wood—those destinies that were solely in his hands to encompass, and that were more independent of chance than any other design of man in all the world.

4

Because Saul thought tonight how young his old father was, he allowed him to win, and Old Nathan was just, gleefully, setting out the pieces for another game when they heard a knock at the door.

Saul went to open it, and there was Dadabhai standing, his almond-shaped eyes glaring, his beard dishevelled, and his clothes torn.

"Come in," said Saul, and Dadabhai entered, and straightway began waving his arms about, and declaiming in a high-pitched, nasal chant, very unlike his usual careful English, a story about his little young wife and a picket of the Vigilants.

"Wait a bit," said Saul. "Calm yourself."

He thought of offering Dadabhai a drink, but remembered that it was a crime in the Transvaal to give a dark-skinned person intoxicating liquor, and brought him a glass of water.

"Now tell me again, what is all this about the picket and your wife?"

"He molested her," declared Dadabhai, and, raising his voice, began anew to make complaint: the law, he chanted, revenge, India, Africa and the British Empire.

"You came upon the man molesting your wife—this picket. Do you know who it was?"

"No," said Dadabhai hurriedly. "Never recognise him again. No. No."

Old Nathan moved in his chair, but did not speak.

"How can you tell, then, it was a picket?" asked Saul

"It was a man walking up and down on guard."

"Well, is there anything you want me to do?"

Dadabhai indicated his condition.

"You fought with him, did you?"

"Yes."

"Are you hurt? Have you come to be examined?"

"You will give evidence," said Dadabhai.

"You're bringing an action against the Vigilants?"

Dadabhai began again to wave his arms. The pickets. The dangerous pickets. Let the pickets be removed.

Old Nathan, still uttering no word, kept his eyes on Dadabhai.

"I'll speak to Duerden tomorrow," promised Saul, and Dadabhai gradually calmed down, and, after repeating his story twice more, departed.

Then Old Nathan, after a moment of silence, said:

"Better not speak to Duerden, Saul."

"Why not?"

Old Nathan mused further before replying.

"I think Dadabhai was lying. I think nobody attacked his wife. Why was he so quick to say he would never recognise the guilty man? I think Dadabhai wants to blackmail the Vigilants. He wants the picketing stopped."

Saul gazed at his father, and thought now that it was not Old Nathan who was the child, it was himself.

Still he said dubiously:

"But would Dadabhai bring his wife into such a business? She walks about with a silver veil over her head. He guards her from public gaze. How could he do it?"

"How could Abraham, before he became the father of many nations, pass off his wife to Pharaoh as his sister in order to save himself? It is long, Saul, since you and I were Orientals. Now, like the people around us, we blame the Indian for his ideas about women and his perjurings before the law. We have forgotten the Eastern way with women, and we do not realise that the Indian is made to vow before false

gods in the European courts and thinks it is a merit to cheat them."

Saul wished he could bring himself to tell his father that he was a wise man, and Old Nathan naïvely waited for him to do so, but there was this blood-shyness that would not allow Saul to praise his father, and they sat smiling at one another until Saul paid him, instead, the compliment of asking his advice.

"Shall I tell Dadabhai that I don't believe him, and that I'll warn Duerden?"

"No. Say only you won't be mixed up with the thing."

5

Saul discovered, nevertheless, that Dadabhai had gone next day to complain to Duerden, and had used his name in corroboration. A message came for him to go to Duerden's office, and he went.

He found Dadabhai repeating, with additional details, his story of the day before, and Duerden listening in silence, like a judge.

"That'll do," said Duerden suddenly. "Go outside a minute, will you? while I speak to Dr. Nathan."

Duerden was accustomed to addressing Indians in this way, and Dadabhai was not unaccustomed to being addressed in this way by Europeans. He did as he was instructed.

"This is a rotten business," said Duerden to Saul. "Now people will say they ought to be protected against their protectors. What the devil are we to do about it? Go to court?"

He looked at Saul, helplessly invoking the cleverness it was his habit to deprecate.

"No, don't worry. Dadabhai isn't thinking of anything like that."

"How do you know?"

Saul enjoyed Duerden's mystified tones. He had a theatrical desire to impress him further.

"I know," he said. "Look here, Duerden, will you let me have a few words with him? I believe I can settle the whole business."

"But aren't you going to tell me—?" began Duerden.

Saul shook his head.

"I'd rather not."

Duerden stared at him a moment. Then, with what was quite a physical expression of playing the game, he said: "Certainly, if you'd rather not," and went out to call back Dadabhai, and himself took a turn on the unpaved sidewalk in front of his office.

"Look here, Dadabhai," said Saul, "you'd better chuck it."

There was a confident warning in Saul's voice which the Indian immediately recognised. He continued, however, to protest.

"Well," asked Saul, "are you prepared to identify the picket? Last night you said positively that, although you had fought with him, you were not. Now what is to prevent the Vigilance Association from simply denying it was one of their pickets?"

And yet, he thought even as he spoke, might not his father be mistaken? How could he know definitely that Dadabhai was lying? The fact that a man wanted to make practical use of a complaint did not prove the complaint was not based on fact.

Dadabhai began once more to explain that it was clearly a guard.

Or, on the other hand, mused Saul, with a sudden sympathy for the man, Dadabhai might feel himself justified in trying to combat, by a ruse, an obvious wrong which the law was not righting for him.

"And what is your wife's feeling about this sort of publicity?" he asked, remembering the delicate, veiled child who had already three times been a mother.

It was for her sake, said Dadabhai, he had come to Duerden and not to the police. He didn't want to make trouble, he protested; he wanted only to be saved from these dangerous pickets.

"Dadabhai," said Saul, "is there not another reason, apart from your wife, why you object to pickets? Wouldn't any court think so, especially as you can't identify the man at all?"

The Indian looked at Saul, hesitated, and spread out his hands in a gesture of abandonment. When Duerden came back Dadabhai said: "I leave Dr. Nathan to speak for me," and, with a dignity at which Saul could have laughed, he returned to his car.

"He won't trouble you," said Saul to Duerden. And Duerden, carefully abstaining from asking Saul what had happened between him and Dadabhai, proceeded to relate his own experience with him, the offered bribe, and his rejection of it. He felt he had to show himself, if not superior in wit, at least not inferior in probity.

Saul listened to him, and did not know with whom he sympathised most: with Duerden for upholding injustice like a gentleman, or with Dadabhai for crawling after justice like a worm. And yet it was, in the end, Dadabhai, whose rights were being betrayed, and who was therefore entitled to the greater consideration.

"But really, you know, Duerden," he said, "you ought to stop the picketing. The Levites are bound to go soon."

Duerden protruded his big, undented jaw.

"Much you know about that," he said. "Only yesterday they were reminded of their promise to leave in a month, and they said they had too much sickness in the camp, and they had spent all their money and couldn't afford to pay for their train-fares home, and other lies like that. And there they still are on the Heights, burning animals before their tabernacle and dancing under the moon. By God, Nathan, if I were the Government, I'd turn a machine-gun on them."

"But, after all, what harm are they doing?" asked Saul.

"Harm? Have you no objection to their disobeying the law you and I have to keep? You know perfectly well they aren't registering births and deaths, or notifying infectious diseases. I'd have thought a doctor would have been the first to care about that, even if discipline hasn't the meaning for you it has for me. Do you want us to wait while they spread their filthy plagues through Gibeon?"

"But if, as you say yourself, they haven't any money, they're bound to go when they've eaten up their mealies and their cattle."

"They might do something else instead."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean Gibeon. Why should they travel further than Gibeon for food. In any case, how are they going to get home without money?"

"The Government will have to give them free railway passes."

The suggestion that the Levites should be granted concessions really incensed Duerden—and not, Saul thought, altogether without reason.

"My good Nathan, you make me tired. Let's, you and I, burn sacrifices, and give kisses of peace, and dance about naked under the moon, and loaf all day and eat up our substance, and then ask the Government to do this and that for us. Let's do it, and see what happens."

"Well, it's a matter of expediency."

"Expediency with niggers! They understand the boot!"

"Besides, you can't compare us with them. What's a crime among civilised people isn't a crime among savages."

"Those aren't savages. They're Bible followers." He gave a sudden loud laugh. "They've got your own distinction. They also claim to be the chosen of God."

Saul looked at Duerden's red-brown, close-shaven, undented jaw with distaste. He felt his harsh laugh to be the identification of a thick and obvious mind. How convinced the man was of his wisdom, how, indeed, it sounded like wisdom, and how inadequate that wisdom was in the face of a situation beyond his understanding!

"No offence," added Duerden, sobered by Saul's silence.

"Why should I be offended?"

"The association. God's Chosen."

"Oh, no, I thought that very witty."

Duerden looked at him, puzzled. Did Saul mean anything he could not fathom?

"Well, but don't you agree with me the law must be kept?" he asked presently.

"Listen, Duerden," said Saul with the impatient patience one gives a child, "it's no use talking about parliamentary laws to people who are following God's laws. If you've given them the Bible, and they've accepted it, you have only yourselves to blame. Those Levites have faith now, and you won't move them by pickets or by threats. They'll go if you can convince them it's God's will, or if, on the other hand, they stay long enough to discover that God has failed them: hasn't replaced their mealie-meal and their beasts, hasn't appeared at the appointed time. The second means a repetition of the time when thousands of Amaxosa died waiting for God's harvest. We ought to concentrate on the first."

"Who could convince them?" asked Duerden.

"A man like Tetyana, for one—he might. He understands them, and he's civilised. But then, of course, you've made an enemy of Tetyana over that hospital business."

"Thanks. If it all depends on a Kaffir doctor—" said Duerden. He squared his powerful shoulders. "No, we'll manage as we've always done, Nathan. It's brought us where we are, and it's good enough."

It's brought us further, he told himself, than it's brought your people, Nathan. You Jews think too much of your cleverness.

And, strangely enough, Saul himself was thinking—not for the first time—much the same thought. He was thinking how marvellous it was that Duerden should represent the dominant race and he the tolerated one. . . . So what justification had he, after

all, for saying anything to Duerden? It might be unaccountable, yet the fact remained: The Nordic way was triumphant.

He smiled slightly. And Duerden, feeling that he was not a bad chap, and remembering too that he had helped the Vigilants out of a possible difficulty with Dadabhai, gave him a sudden friendly knock on the shoulder.

"Oh, let's forget the bloody niggers. You haven't been up at the house for weeks. Hermia came back three days ago. She'll wonder what's happened to you."

He took it quite for granted that Saul should be his wife's friend rather than his own. Their queernesses matched. Saul felt as though he were cheating a child. Diethelm's contemptuous stare had taken away his innocence, or had, at least, shown him the gap made by its departure.

"I'll come along sometime," said Saul.

"Why not now? What about a sundowner?"

He could hate Duerden often, thought Saul, but he could not always dislike him. No, he could not dislike this big child with his fumbling decencies.

And he felt suddenly that he must, he must, he must most urgently see Hermia. His heart sucked up life as if it were a vacuum.

CHAPTER XIII

I

So there it was again. One could not easily effect a human disconnection in a small place like Gibeon. Hermia and Saul were going about together as before —only with less candour. Nothing was clear any longer, except the fact that nothing was clear. They were not friends. They were not lovers. At unexpected moments, as they were talking about the most impersonal things, they would find their eyes meeting and refusing to part. When they were sitting by themselves in Hermia's living-room, and Arnold Duerden appeared in unexpected cheeriness, the whole tone of their talk, however innocent it might have been in subject, became subtly changed. They were different towards one another when Arnold was there, and they both knew it.

But particularly when they met Dr. Diethelm was there an uneasiness between them. And they seemed always to be meeting Dr. Diethelm now. Or perhaps it was that they noticed him more than they noticed other people. And Dr. Diethelm did nothing except look at them, but his look charged them with guilt—it gave them, still more, the consciousness of guilt.

It all made Hermia feel that, for the sake of her faith in herself, she must have the thing out with Saul. She must say to him frankly: "Let us give up

pretending with one another. We are not behaving like friends. We don't want to be lovers. But we have some meaning for one another. What shall we do about it?"

Curious situation. By what precedents could she determine the case?

However, she was never given the opportunity for this open discussion. Dr. Diethelm himself prevented it.

2

The position of Dr. Diethelm had lately been more difficult than ever in Gibeon. He felt like an outlaw, and he behaved like one. He encouraged his native interpreter to go to the camp of the Levites, and although he was not actually touting for work, the effect was that he did get work from them.

No one could prove anything against him, but the Vigilance Association felt themselves entitled to demand an explanation, and they sent him a note asking him to attend a meeting they were specially holding to consider the matter.

Dr. Diethelm did not reply to them. They held their meeting, and he simply did not come to it.

It was towards evening. The meeting saved its face by discussing other questions, but Dr. Diethelm's refusal to obey their summons gave them a sense of frustration. The meeting broke up, and Duerden, with two or three friends, went away to the Gibeon Club.

The month was September. Winds blew the sharp dust about the streets of Gibeon, but now and then there stole subtly through a sense of spring. One had

no right, in these parts of Africa, to speak of spring and autumn. A wind came and brought the heavy rain and it was summer. A wind came and brought the heavy rain and it was winter. Only sometimes, in the third quarter of the year, there rose a movement in the blood, a desire for—one did not know what. And that, perhaps, was spring.

Duerden and his friends went towards their club, and they did not think of spring, but a particular craving for action was in them. They had several drinks, and they decided that they could no longer bear the contemptuous treatment of Dr. Diethelm.

"If he won't come to us, we'll go to him," said Duerden.

"It's half-past seven. He'll be at the hotel," put in the vice-principal of the Gibeon school.

"Let's have it out with him now," suggested a young farmer, who had come in nine miles to attend the abortive meeting, and felt that he had been cheated.

They went, the three of them, to Dr. Diethelm's hotel. He was on the stoep, standing beside a tub of tree-ferns, lighting a cigar. Arnold and his friends walked up to him. Other men were lounging about in cane chairs on the stoep.

"Well, Diethelm, we were waiting for you," said Duerden.

Dr. Diethelm's overhanging eyebrows twitched slightly. He put his cigar in his mouth.

"You might have had the decency to reply to our note," said the farmer.

Dr. Diethelm sucked heavily, with rounded, projecting lips, at his cigar, but he made no reply.

The men on the stoep turned interestedly in the direction of the complainants and hoped that something might happen.

Duerden felt himself peculiarly—for he was not a nervy man—irritated by Diethelm's sucking lips.

"We know," he declared, "that you have been attending the Levites."

Dr. Diethelm gave a few more puffs at his cigar, took it out and contemplated it (the wet end annoyed Duerden again), and then, at last, broke silence.

"So?"

"We are aware," went on Duerden, staring with distaste at Dr. Diethelm's cigar, "that your native interpreter goes to their camp."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, indeed."

The blood seemed to be rising in angry waves to Duerden's head. He hated the German for his German voice, for his offensive casualness. Was he to be made a fool of by a man like this? He felt himself to be the repository of England's honour.

"Yes," he repeated, "and we object to it."

"You object? And what is your authority?"

"We object—the Vigilance Association."

"And is this the business of the Vigilance Association?"

"We choose to make it our business."

"I see. Well, I choose to tell the Vigilance Association to go to the devil."

People, leaving the hotel after dinner, came hovering round. It galled Duerden that any man should be seen to be treating him with contempt.

"Look here, Diethelm, no lip," he said.

Dr. Diethelm's heavy face grew thick with blood. He remained absolutely still for a moment. Then, suddenly, he pushed Duerden with his shoulder, and made to pass him.

"Not so rough," said Duerden, angry, and yet strangely happy too—happy as whenever there arose the need for physical action. "Not so quick either. We have a warning to give you. If you would not hear it in private, you shall hear it in public."

Dr. Diethelm once more stood bulkily still.

"Now you listen to me, Diethelm," Duerden went on in a voice of authority.

"Now you listen to me, Duerden," the other unexpectedly interrupted him, and there was such menace in his tones that every onlooker on the stoep stiffened. "Don't speak to me about warnings. I can give warnings too."

"Oh, yes?" said Duerden encouragingly. "Come along then."

"You better let me go home, Duerden," said Dr. Diethelm, breathing thickly, his eyebrows twitching, the cigar in his big fingers unsteady.

"Rather not," declined Duerden.

"You better."

"By no means." Duerden was extraordinarily exhilarated. He had not had so agreeable a sensation since his last battle in France ten years ago. He felt like a man with the power to stand alone against an army. There was something within his mighty chest —a great swelling something—that pressed, it almost seemed physically, against the walls of his body, hurting him with its strength. He wanted to shout in a terrible voice.

But he was not at all oblivious of his audience. He restrained his ecstasy. He spoke in his usual quite pleasant tones, though there was a kind of lilting thrill in them.

"By no means," he repeated. "We are about to exchange warnings. Out with yours."

"Well, you have it, then," said the German with a sort of heavy urgency. "You have it. I tell you, if you want trouble, you look for it at home."

As behind a pulsation of lights the stage in Duerden's mind revolved, bringing a new scene. As an actor in a theatre he saw his darkened audience. Presently he spoke. But it was not clear what he said.

And, beyond control now, Dr. Diethelm added:

"You warn me about the Kaffirs. I warn you about your wife."

Duerden took a step towards Diethelm. Diethelm did not move. He spoke again: "Your wife and the Jew," he completed.

He might have known, and he might not have known, what would happen, but he could not help himself. He felt impelled to shout his charge to the height of his voice. Nothing, nothing, could have stopped him now.

Duerden pulled him from the stoep towards the gravel before the hotel. Dr. Diethelm was a very big man, but he was an old man, twenty and more years older than Duerden, and he had never in his life taken exercise. He staggered this way and that beneath Duerden's blows, flinging his arms before him in the direction of Duerden, the blood poured from his face, and he fell to his knees, and Duerden dragged him half

up, threw aside the waving, impotent arms, and went again at the stiff body and the bleeding face.

Now men from the stoep, waking from their fascinated immobility, came to separate them. And they clutched at Duerden's persistent body and drew him away, and Dr. Diethelm sought the earth and lay there unconscious.

3

Well, what was all the excitement about the Levites compared with this? There were people in Gibeon who heard that Duerden had killed Diethelm, and the gossip about Saul and Hermia broke into luscious efflorescence. The women stood at their telephones, and the men gathered at the club, and those who had seen the fight and separated the fighters felt quietly important. Everything was everybody's business.

Old Nathan was as shocked as a child. He could not look at his son. They sat together, each with a book, and said no word about what had happened. A few drops of rain fell with a clatter on the corrugated-iron roof, and Old Nathan gazed upwards and said: "There will be a heavy storm tonight." And presently, putting down a new book on Napoleon he was reading, he added, with his eyes on the curtained window: "It seems a big man has the same worries as a small man. I did not know before Napoleon's family were making him such trouble. In the same way I have seen a man getting on a little in business, and his family is angry and asks, and he is angry and gives. . . . And Napoleon's stomach also was not too good, I see. It is a pleasure to remember that there is a stomach under the finest uniform."

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Saul stared at his father with his deep-set grey eyes. He felt ashamed before him as if he were a small boy.

Presently he got up from his chair.

"I think I'll go to bed," he said.

He went to his room, undressed, lay down, and turned out the light. Two hours later he heard cautious steps coming down the passage. They stopped outside his room. His father—he knew—was listening if he were asleep. He made no motion, yet it seemed his father felt his wakefulness.

"Saul," he whispered.

Saul did not reply.

"Is it true?" asked Old Nathan.

"No," said Saul, roughly and hastily, and he hated the question, not for its suspicion, but for its intrusion, and he turned to the wall, and Old Nathan, without another word, went away.

4

In the Duerden household there was a different kind of atmosphere. Before ever her husband had come home, Hermia knew all that had happened, and more than had happened. She waited for him inside the house, and she waited for him at the gate, and when at last, standing there, she saw him coming, she went quickly back to the house again.

She met him finally in the living-room. Her colour was full, and her eyes of light, unflecked grey-blue were shining beneath their level black brows. She spoke quickly.

"They say you've killed Diethelm."

He did not answer her.

She ceased to care whether Diethelm was alive or dead.

"Arnold," she cried, "you didn't believe him!"

"Yes, I did," he answered her.

"Arnold, I tell you—"

"Tell me nothing," he shouted suddenly. "All Gibeon is laughing at me. My God, what a fool I've been!"

His hair, usually so well-brushed and plastered down, was now standing stickily upwards. It was full of dust. His face was brown with dust too. His hands were dusty. His clothes were dusty. His eyelashes were dusty, and his blood-shot eyes moved rapidly from side to side as she confronted him. He was a man who had an ideal of calmness at a crisis, but he did not even think of being calm now.

"You must listen to me," she cried.

He turned abruptly away.

"No, you must, you must," she insisted.

"If you don't leave me alone, I'll do something to you," he said.

She felt herself wanting him to fulfil his threat. It would have relieved her. She had to establish contact with him, if only through brutality.

"Do it, then, do it," she demanded.

He turned round to look at her with his flaming eyes before opening the door to go to the bathroom. "Don't let me hear your voice," he said, and his own sounded blurred.

She sat down on the couch in the living-room, and heard him presently dragging his mattress from the part of the stoep where they slept most of the year

round, to the opposite side of the house. Then, immediately, he went to bed.

She remained where she was, and an hour passed. Then she walked slowly to his sleeping-place. She stood leaning against the white-washed pillar of the stoep. It was dark. He made no movement. Presently he drew several very deep breaths, and she knew he was asleep. She could not bear it. She fell down beside his mattress on the concrete floor, and put her hands on his body. "Arnold, Arnold," she cried, tugging at him.

He turned round. "What is it?" he said sleepily.

"Oh, Arnold, believe me. It isn't true."

She knew that she had thought of Saul even while she felt she belonged to Duerden. Yet it was only the belonging that seemed to matter now. The body was triumphant over the spirit. It was everything.

She clung to him.

He sat up, suddenly remembering, and threw her off.

"Will you go away?" he said. "I'll sleep at the hotel if you don't leave me alone."

She moved back to the pillar and stood there. She did not resent Arnold's words or attitude. She could, without shame, have humiliated herself endlessly. She waited. The minutes passed—not very many. And then she heard again the deep breathing that told her her husband was asleep.

5

She went to her side of the stoep, sat down on her bed, and looked out into the night. The heavy storm

Old Nathan had prophesied earlier in the evening had passed over Gibeon, but clouds still made the night black, and a little fresh breeze brought with it a tale of rain in some place not far away.

Through the darkness the scent of stocks yearned up to her. Stocks were not flowers she loved in the daytime; they drooped beneath the midday sun, they had never any clarity of shape or colour. But, hidden in the night, they stirred her like a memory.

She went down the steps, picked a few sprigs of the flowers, and put them beside her bed. She undressed and lay down, and thought with melancholy indulgence of the unrealised hopes of her girlhood. Now she was thirty, she was the wife of a man who knew nothing of her but her body, the mother of a child whose desire was not towards her, a singer in little villages. And yet, they held her—the man, the child, the villages. They were her life.

How strange the way she could humiliate herself to Arnold. . . . And yet—not strange. Below everything her conscience was uneasy. If she had not had this reckless friendship with Saul, there would have been no gossip, none of this trouble need have happened. She was to blame. Saul was to blame. Not her husband.

She felt utterly miserable. She wanted to go and weep over Arnold, that he might tell her if this was all it was nothing, and give her absolution. She found herself sobbing aloud, and, through her genuine distress, she wished Arnold were close enough to hear her. It was as if in her tears she spilt her womanhood that a man might see of what it was made.

How could she get at him? What could she do to penetrate his thickness?

Now she thought of that impenetrability, and she went on thinking of it, and her mood changed. She would never have needed Saul if her husband had been able to give her understanding. After all, the fundamental fault was his. Yes, he slept there so confident in his just manhood, and he was responsible for everything.

She thought of the stand she would make against him tomorrow, and, at the same time, she still wanted his pity, his belief and his comfort.

Her confused mind grew dim.

She fell asleep.

6

She was awake early. The clouds were gone. From her raised stoep she could see the veld. A great black stretch faced her where the old grass had been burnt away before the coming of the new. There were people who said it was bad to burn the grass. It deprived the soil of its natural manure when it did not, indeed, leave it unlocked to be ravished by the fierce rains. But still the winter grass was regularly destroyed, and when the rains came the new grass made what growth it could.

Beyond the blackened veld she could see the Heights. But she could not see—the Heights were too far away—the eruption of huts on them. Yet she thought of them. She thought how this eruption, now infecting Gibeon, would itself wither into a scab and fall away, but its germ of sickness would remain be-

hind to run its course in Gibeon. Everything had grown wrong in Gibeon since the coming of the Levites. . . .

The sun was a wide glow behind the Heights. It rose speedily, but below her the stocks, like firm, fresh vegetables, stood strong in shadow.

She felt the need for preparation. Preparation for what? She did not know.

She hurried into the bathroom and dressed herself. She was not, as a rule, a brisk riser. She liked to do little things in the garden in her dressing-gown, and then come back and stretch herself on the cool morning bed and read. What was there to get sharply ready for in Gibeon?

Arnold was different. He deprecated what he called Hermia's loafing. He had the ineradicable idea that doing things in the house was work, and doing what Hermia did was not work. She could never convince him that it was more profitable for her to pay a woman five shillings a day to do the household sewing and mending than to give up her own singing and writing time to such domesticities. But the truth was he did not consider the question economically. He considered it sexually. He wanted Hermia to be the traditional wife.

As for punctual dressing, he felt there was something moral about it, and he asked her often what she imagined the passing neighbours thought of her gardening at eight o'clock in the morning in her dressing-gown. The worst, she once told him. "The worst? What do you mean the worst?" he demanded. "Oh, they know it's a sign of abandonment."

But this morning it seemed to her as if she had to

gird her loins. She dressed herself with punctiliousness.

Then she went and stood on the stoep where Arnold must pass her on his way into the house, and she felt ironically that she was like Esther posed to attract attention in the inner court of Ahasuerus.

Presently she heard him waking up. He cleared his throat several times in a manner very familiar to her, and then he got out of bed.

Her heart began to beat as his steps approached. What would he say, do, when he found her there, white, with dark circles under her eyes, but lovely and appealing? She was not unaware that she looked lovely and appealing—she had considered herself in the glass with a woe-begone interest. Yes. She knew. And it gave her comfort; for she wanted her husband even through her anger against him, and because of his anger against her.

He said: "Excuse me." She stood aside involuntarily. He walked on without looking at her, his eyes thick, his wavy hair not entirely freed from the dust by the hurried washing of the night before, a red-brown morning stubble on his cheeks and chin, his feet bare, his legs like strong pillars under the pyjamas that formed themselves to his shape.

The button at his neck was not fastened, and the hairs on his chest were visible. How ugly he was now, she thought in her fury because he had passed her—how ugly with his strong red toes and the hairs on his chest and the stubble on his face and his thick eyes that would not look at her! She hated him as she watched him going into the house.

At breakfast time she sat down at the table, and deliberately waited for him again.

He came in, well-dressed, giving, as always, the impression of having been shaved to the last possible degree, rested, vigorous—a handsome, arrogant man once more. He took his customary place and addressed no word to her.

She wanted to say something terrible. She said, in a small voice that surprised herself: "Well, Arnold?"

It was as if a blast were piping in a little whine through a chink in a door.

He did not answer her.

The blast—it was like that now—blew the door open.

"Do you hear me?" her utterance came loudly.

"I told you yesterday not to speak to me," he said.

"But I will speak to you. I will."

He rose from his seat.

"Then, if you don't mind, I'll go out."

Today, it seemed, he could maintain his ideal of calmness.

She sprang up, shut the only door there was in the room, and stood against it.

"And tomorrow, and the day after, and next month and next year?"

He could not force her aside. He sat down again, and, taking an orange from a dish, began mechanically to peel it. His impulse of last night to believe the worst was gone, but his feeling against Hermia persisted. Whether she and Saul had been lovers or not, she had landed him in this ugly business by her irresponsible conduct. If everyone thought it was true, it might just as well *be* true. He felt betrayed because

of the eyes that looked at him as at one betrayed.

"Are we going to live like this always?" Hermia went on. "Or are you sooner or later going to speak to me, and, if so, when?"

He remained silent.

"Or, if never, are you leaving the house or am I?"

If he had wanted to he could not have answered her, for he had no answer to make. He had this large grievance against her, but he had not thought, in practical terms, of marital rearrangements. He had merely thought of his enormous anger.

"Will you stay at the Phœnix Hotel?" she asked. "Or at the Club? Or perhaps you would like to move to another town altogether?"

He sat staring at his orange.

"And what about Naomi?" she continued.

He dissected his orange carefully and began to eat it. He was left behind, bewildered, by her progressive assumptions. Yes, indeed, if they parted, what was the next step? And, good heavens, the child! And then, money: how, in such circumstances, did a moneyless man define his dignity?

Something of his predicament Hermia realised. It was too terrible, his helplessness. She pitied him. Arnold, so firmly a man, facing contempt of his manhood. Arnold, the devoted father, unable to maintain his child. Arnold, the social pivot of Gibeon, without the little necessary money to back his pride.

"Oh, Arnold," she cried, "how can you, how can you, be such a fool?"

She approached him. She wanted to put her arms around him. She could not be angry with him: she

was so moved towards him because of his humiliation.

But he turned away from her.

"Don't do that," he said. And, since she had made this conciliatory step, he felt his sense of power renewed. And, in the pride that was thus come back to him, he thought that he would rather work as a road-mender than take food in Hermia's house. Nevertheless, he went on mechanically eating his orange.

He tried to tell her about the road-mending, but, as he opened his mouth to do so, he was overwhelmed by an unexpected emotion, and a rising something in his chest told him that if he spoke there might happen that for which he would never forgive himself.

He began cutting the orange peel into little strips.

All at once he realised that, as Hermia had left her position at the door, he need not sit still any longer, that he could do something—if only escape with one front of his self-respect unbroken.

He rose and went to the door, and, in a moment, Hermia heard his firm steps going down the path to the gate.

She stood at the window and watched him. He held his head up, he walked splendidly, he was a man. And he would have none of her. He was, at the same time, not fit for the realest civilisation, and she was—she believed—civilised. For these very reasons now he would have none of her. Did he still, as last night, believe Dr. Diethelm? Well, he would have none of her.

The thought came back and back to her until she gave it acceptance. And this acceptance made her feel calmer. She sat down to think what she must do.

To begin with, there was the question of Saul. She

knew suddenly that she had an ugly feeling towards him. She saw him now—their association—with the eyes of Gibeon, and his Slav face became more Slavonic, his alien blood more alien, his different mind too reprehensibly different. She found she could not bear it that anyone should imagine an intimate relationship between them. She found, in this moment of testing, that, having flouted public opinion, she could not ignore it.

Gibeon! She despised it, and it was too strong for her. She had to justify herself to it. She had to prove to Gibeon that she and Saul had never been lovers, that her husband had never thought so, that Dr. Diethelm—she was compelled to proof.

She wrote to Saul asking him to come to her.

CHAPTER XIV

I

Saul had not slept during the night, and, in the morning, when he got out of bed, his face was a greenish colour and he felt as sick and sore as if it had been he who had struggled with Duerden in the dust.

The Kaffir who worked for the Nathans brought him a cup of tea, and he drank it, and it comforted his parched mouth. Then he shaved his cheeks, which were always slightly hollow beneath his cheek-bones, and his rather long upper lip and his bony chin. His eyes felt gritty, they looked deeper-sunk than ever beneath his thick eyebrows.

No, as Old Nathan had said those years ago when he had come upon Dr. Diethelm studying his son's photograph, and as he often said now with a manner that implied a contradiction, it was not what one would call a good-looking face. And yet there were people—and quite often women—who found it not unattractive. Perhaps it was the melancholy eyes—was it only the formation of the lids, or was it something else that made them melancholy? Perhaps it was the unexpectedly intimate and friendly smile. Perhaps it was that his various uglinesses blended into a kind of harmony—well, Old Nathan could afford to say that he was not good-looking.

They sat down together at breakfast, and Old

Nathan ate, as usual, just a soft-boiled egg, and Saul had another cup of tea, and they talked about the political news in the morning paper that came from Johannesburg.

Then Saul brought out his car, and set off, as always at this time, on his round. He felt that all the people in Gibeon were looking at him, and now and then he had to raise his hat and smile, but he had a sensation of physical nausea in him.

Whenever he stopped before a house, the people in the houses next door and opposite came casually on to their stoeps or out into their gardens to look at him—as if they had never seen him before. And, indeed, there was now a certain aspect of him that they had not seen before, and that they wanted to verify. They examined him furtively for this mysterious transformation.

He was not at all fortified by his own knowledge of the facts. He felt himself to be what they thought him to be.

He remembered how once, in England, a friend of his had put him through a psychological experiment. "This will be our test," he said. "We'll assume you've committed arson. Now I'm going to give you, one by one, fifty words or so, some pertinent to the charge, and some having no bearing on it. These words you'll cap with other words they suggest to you, and I'll examine your reactions, notice what you answer, how quickly you answer, how your answers combine with one another."

The man began to write out his words, and before even he had his list ready, Saul was full of discomfort, his heart was stirring uneasily; he felt that he

had to be terribly, terribly careful or he would convict himself; he felt that he was truly being tried for the burning down of someone's property.

Whenever a word came that had anything to do with fire, he responded quickly and, as he thought, soundly and innocently. But then what happened was that a word or two further on he would say something quite wild and ridiculous, something that had no relation one could possibly see to the word which was supposed to have evoked an associated image in his mind.

He began to feel that he was not behaving like a man confidently guiltless. He grew actually frightened. Having safely, and with a genuine sense of relief, countered the word "petrol" with the harmless response "motor-car," he came a crash on the very next word. "Nigger," said his examiner. "Woodpile," he returned as if by instinct. What thousands of uncompromising ideas the term "nigger" might not have evoked in a South African's brain, and he must needs choose to think of a nigger in a woodpile! Woodpile—fire—a very partnership!

He had felt, sitting there among his books in a London room, and having done nothing but study for weeks—he had felt as if he had definitely committed arson and convicted himself of his crime out of his own mouth.

And now, as he drove about Gibeon to see his patients, he might really have been a discovered adulterer. It was not only the curious eyes, the thought of the false charge, that made him uneasy; it was that, despite his own knowledge of the facts, he too consciously reflected to people their own conception of him. He had thus the sensations of innocence and

guilt, both together. In his own way, as Arnold and Hermia in their way, he felt the eyes of Gibeon.

At eleven o'clock, when he came home, he found the message from Hermia waiting for him, and he went to her at once.

2

She was wandering about the garden, the sun on her short black curls, pinching off the tops of her seedlings. Despite the calm resolution she had made, she could not sit still or read or play or sing. She could not go out to do anything in particular—she was so restless.

Yet her occupation gave her an air of peace.

She heard the latch of the gate drop, and looked up to see Saul. She came towards him slowly. He explained that he had been on his rounds and had only just got her note. "Won't you come in?" she said.

They went into the living-room together, and sat down on the comfortable, dilapidated chairs.

"Have you had tea?" she asked in the way of South Africans in the middle of the morning.

Saul told her he had not, and she insisted on giving him some.

Saul looked around him. Nothing was changed in this room he had first seen six months ago except the flowers. She had had then the last of her Irish roses, and brambles with yellow berries. Now she had branches of flowering peach: the ordinary peach-trees were just past their bloom. Even the map-like design on the wall where the rain had come through was not different. It had not been white-washed over, and so it was no better. And it did not rain at Gibeon in the

winter, so it was no worse. The rivers of this map on the wall remained undiverted, and the borders of the countries unextended. And, as before, Hermia was opening out a little gate-leg table and spreading a cloth for tea.

"How is Dr. Diethelm?" she asked suddenly.

"I hear—they say—one of his ear-drums is broken."

"They say, they say," repeated Hermia.

"Yes, there must be a good deal of talk," agreed Saul.

She sat down. "What are you going to do about it?"

"Whatever you wish."

"I ought to tell you," said Hermia, "that my husband—" she spoke the words clearly, she kept her eyes with steadiness on Saul's face— "believed Dr. Diethelm. At least, he said so last night."

Saul had no comment to offer. His pale face paled still further. He remained silent.

And the thought came to him that, after all, there was something to believe. They had imagined, spoken, felt—yes, a great deal. Was as much as this to be utterly rejected? Was physical communion to be held the only communion?

But yet it was the physical part, he thought again, that mattered. A man might murder another a thousand times in his soul, and the victim of his thoughts walked about alive. But a few grains of powder, a nodule of metal, did truly end him. He might look at a hundred women to lust after them in his heart, and, despite the Bible, no court would find adultery nor any society charge him with it. Life passed on, and those women he had coveted remained inviolate. But a casual possession rendered him forever answerable.

One could get away from the spirit—ignore it, dis-

count it, deny it. One could not thrust aside the flesh. In the end there was the simple and complete difference between something happening and something not happening.

No. If one chose, there was nothing to believe. He and Hermia might consider themselves as innocent as they wished.

His eyes, as his mind ran on so, were on Hermia, and he saw that she was inimical to him. It made him feel that his very appearance now must justify his conclusion. He was thinking in grand terms of spirit and body, but there he sat looking, no doubt, as sick as he felt, and Hermia, viewing him in the light of what had happened between Dr. Diethelm and her husband, must be revolted by the thought that anybody could imagine an intimate connection between herself and this unmanly-seeming man.

And, in fact, he was right. Hermia was comparing him, with his sallow skin and high cheek-bones, with her robust and virile husband. Was it really possible that, as recently as yesterday, she had been passionately interested in him?

She despised herself for it as she marvelled at it. In this harsh daylight everything had become physical. She scorned this nonsense of mental affinity.

So strangely, even at this moment, did she, reflecting Saul's mind, exhibit this affinity.

The native came in with the tea. She handed Saul a cup. He watched his hand shaking.

"What does he propose to do?" he inquired.

"Arnold?"

"Yes."

"He doesn't say."

He found it difficult to use his voice for his next question.

"Has he ideas about divorce and things of that kind?"

Divorce! On Saul's account!

She looked at him with light, hard, examining, comparing eyes. "I don't know." Her voice was hurried and affronted. He had felt embarrassed, a preposterous masquerader of a Don Juan, before, but her tones now stirred him to resentment.

"You sent for me," he said shortly. "Why?"

Her words did not match her manner.

"Are you prepared to continue as if nothing had happened?"

He regarded her with astonishment.

"Is that what you want?"

"Yes."

"And your husband?"

"He will want it too. He can be angry. But he can't go on believing the worst. He was mad last night."

She paused.

"And then I suppose you can imagine what the standard joke must be now in Gibeon."

He waited for her to tell him.

"Everybody must be asking why Duerden doesn't keep his Vigilants at home."

Saul smiled in faint irony.

"It seems likely."

"Arnold will never bear that."

"Not easily."

"If we can stop such talk by an attitude of family friendship—"

"I see," said Saul.

After a moment he added:

"The idea, in fact, is to save your husband's face. That is the great consideration."

"Don't we owe it to him?" cried Hermia.

He answered her with a certain venom.

"If you think so, we do."

What did he mean by that?

He told her in his next sentence.

"If you think we have been more than friends—perhaps we do."

More than friends! His insolent recognitions!

He saw her steadily rising antagonism.

"It isn't going to be pleasant, the way you feel towards me now."

He was a man who could accept a truth. Something like respect struggled against her hostility. She tried to be decent. She said: "It won't be—after a time—so hard."

There was a slight smile on his greenish face.

"Everyone knows I am here temporarily. We'll make our demonstration, and very soon—I'll be gone."

He rose, and his knees revealed to himself their weakness. The slight smile remained petrified on his face.

"I'll come whenever you send for me."

No. She could not altogether despise him—or thus, herself.

"Not only," she said, "as a demonstration."

But she did not herself know what exactly she meant by her words.

3

Her husband came home in the evening. She heard his strong footsteps and went out to meet him on the dark path.

He had had a terrible day. He had gone, first, to his office, to make his usual show of a professional availability. He had then deliberately walked over to the Club, and sat there for hours, being a jolly fellow. He had had lunch there, and played bridge there.

Towards evening he had transferred himself to the Phœnix Hotel, and had had drinks with several men on the stoep.

He had, in short, spent the day exhibiting to Gibeon his stiff back, his unwrung withers.

Then, not knowing what else to do, he had walked home.

Now, in the melancholy dark, he heard Hermia approaching him, and he stood still, the boy's mind in his man's body lost and bewildered and seeking.

She touched him. "Oh, Arnold." He said, "Don't," but he could not help it, the will was gone from him—he put his arms round her.

She yearned towards his familiar body. They were linked by the matehood of years.

She lifted her face to his, knew there were tears in her eyes, hoped he would know it too, and, past all her plannings, loved him. "You defended me yesterday against Dr. Diethelm. Aren't you going to defend me against everybody?"

That was how she put it.

His face found her tears.

CHAPTER XV

I

At the same time Saul and his father were sitting at their evening meal, and no words were passing between them. But at last Old Nathan asked his son if he had heard the rumour that Dr. Diethelm was seriously injured. "They say his ear-drum is broken. He will be quite deaf in his right ear, they say."

"Yes, so I have heard," said Saul.

"Will he?" asked Old Nathan.

"Will he be deaf, do you mean? How do I know?"

"I am sorry for him," said Old Nathan. "He is an embittered man. And Duerden began the whole thing, so I hear."

Saul made a gesture with his shoulders and did not answer.

But Old Nathan's report was effectually true. The next day it was common property that Bramson, the small, bow-legged Jewish attorney who had won away the bank's work from Duerden, had been sent for by Dr. Diethelm. For Bramson's body might be short and his legs crooked, but his head was both long and straight. He had the largest practice in Gibeon, not because anybody liked him, but because people, on the matter of business, take the best they can get.

It would have been wiser for Dr. Diethelm to be in hospital, but he was in his own house.

It was a house made of an inferior purplish brick,

with an unpainted and rusting corrugated-iron roof, and a narrow verandah supported on thin wooden poles. There were a few trees and old rose-bushes in the garden. A big, crooked, unpruned peach-tree, accidentally sprung up from a stone thrown into the garden, was just past its flower. It was laden with young leaves and tiny peaches.

The house had four rooms and a passage. Although Dr. Diethelm was reputed to be a rich man, there had been no attempt to make the rooms comfortable. The front one, on the right-hand side, was the consulting-room. It had a couch on which Dr. Diethelm's patients stretched themselves to be examined, a desk, a few bentwood chairs, and some unpainted deal shelves bearing a number of dusty papers, a few medical books, several bottles, and a case of medical instruments. There was a tattered linoleum on the floor. The walls were a dirty green, and quite bare.

Opposite the consulting-room was the living-room. It had a hard sofa and arm-chairs, covered in black pegamoid through which the white cotton backing showed in streaks. There was a highly carved walnut sideboard against one wall. The top of it was full of yellowish rings where unwiped glasses or bottles had been placed. There was a large walnut table in the middle of the room, covered with a stained and worn-out green plush table-cloth, and around it stood half a dozen chairs of different kinds that no one except Dr. Diethelm ever sat on. Here, as in the consulting-room, there were no pictures on the walls, but a calendar sent him by a Johannesburg wholesale drug merchant hung on a long black nail.

Behind the consulting-room was a room full of boxes,

old newspapers, old clothes, sacks of things, tools, broken pots and pans, empty bottles, a ladder.

Facing this was Dr. Diethelm's bedroom. He lay on an old brass double-bed, from which some of the knobs and two rails were missing. A trunk and a suit-case, dust on the top of both, were visible under the bed. An unsteady Japanese bamboo table stood beside it, and next to the table was a dining-room chair. A little reversible wool mat, made in Austria, covered a small patch of the deal floor. The rest of the floor was bare. It had once been stained and polished, but the native who was Dr. Diethelm's only servant had given up attending to it, and Dr. Diethelm, once so exact a man, could not take the trouble to reprimand him for his neglect. There were a wardrobe, a dressing-table, and a washstand of deal, stained pine, in the room, but the yellow shine was off in many places, particularly on the washstand, where the water had splashed and trickled down, leaving streaks of bare wood. The washstand stood on three legs in a dark corner behind the door. It stood there because it was sustained, where the leg was missing, by the two walls of the corner. And on it were a basin and jug of chipped enamel, and, on the floor beside it, a slop-pail.

The drawers of the dressing-table did not fit, and they gaped crookedly, and several of the handles were missing. A photogravure of a lady and a number of little girls, playing about a garden in white lace empire dresses, hung aslant over the washstand, but in its dark position one could not see its features unless one went close up to it and made a deliberate effort. It was strange it should be in this room at all. Who had

ever hung it up Dr. Diethelm did not know; presumably it had come with all the other things when he had bought somebody's complete household in an auction-room on his arrival in Gibeon, but, since it was there, he had never troubled to have it removed, because its presence mattered no more to him than its absence would have done. He never really saw it. A crooked yellow blind hung part-way down the window, the lower half of which was open to admit the soft and lovely air.

Dr. Diethelm lay high against his pillows, and most of his face was covered in bandages, and he spoke with difficulty. His naturally harsh, strong voice had a subdued quality now.

Bramson sat down on the chair beside the Japanese table, and Dr. Diethelm told him at once that when the criminal case against Duerden was over he would sue him civilly. "What can I get for this ear?" He indicated his right ear, but he turned the left side of his head—the less injured side—towards the attorney that he might hear his answer.

Bramson asked him if he had been examined by the district surgeon, and if the deafness were due, as people said, to a broken ear-drum.

"No. The labyrinth," Dr. Diethelm informed him, and added that he would see a specialist as soon as he was able.

He lay staring morosely before him.

"How about the other ear?" inquired Bramson.

Dr. Diethelm did not hear him. The attorney spoke louder.

"Is the other ear all right?" he shouted.

"It is affected. I don't know how seriously. In the right ear I shall become totally deaf."

Bramson shook his head in sympathetic and contemplative silence.

"We'll claim two thousand pounds for the disability," he said, after a while, "for loss of work, medical attendance, pain and suffering and so forth. Where do you want to be heard? In Pretoria or here? The circuit court sits in Gibeon in two months' time."

"Here," said Dr. Diethelm fiercely. "Let it be here. Let all Gibeon be present in court."

"But, of course," pointed out Bramson, "Duerden will counter-claim. He'll bring an action for defamation."

Diethelm regarded him painfully. "Defamation," Bramson repeated. "Slander."

"What can he claim?"

"As much as you claim. More, if he chooses."

"Will he get more?"

"Our courts don't award big damages for slander. But, in any case, you understand, you won't get any money out of Duerden. Duerden is a man of straw—man of straw, I said. You can make him bankrupt. But what's that to Duerden? He could have been made bankrupt any time during the last ten years. His liabilities have always exceeded his assets. And everyone knows his wife keeps the family going."

"Then I will get him in that way," said Dr. Diethelm. "I will get him through his wife. Let us see if they will remain a happy married couple after my action for damages, and his action for slander."

His solitary exposed eye, swollen, with a purple bag

beneath, his thick voice, were equally charged with menace. The blanket on his body shook.

"And then," added Bramson, without emotion, "Nathan will also bring a suit."

"Let him. Let them all bring what they like."

"And he must get damages against you."

Dr. Diethelm flushed more fiercely.

"Are you advising me to do nothing?"

"It might pay you to let the whole business blow over. You face two slander actions now, and even if you win your case for damages against Duerden, you will have to find the costs on your side, because you won't be able to get anything out of him."

Bramson said as much as this for duty's sake. He certainly did not hope that Dr. Diethelm would take his advice and that he would lose a profitable Supreme Court action. Nor did he really expect it.

So he was not disappointed when Dr. Diethelm struggled in a fury to sit up, and lay back again, white with nausea, indicating his bandages, his deafened ear, and gasping his determination to be revenged.

Bramson made an effort to smooth him down. After a time he said:

"Well, I had to warn you. You are facing an expensive business. Whatever the result, you will not be satisfied. But if you are absolutely set on it, we'll go ahead at once."

2

Now, really, Gibeon was becoming a very important place. The eyes of the whole country were on it. The Administration of the Transvaal was being asked to adjudicate on the matter of the boycott of Dr. Tetyana

against the hospital. The Government of the Union was being warned to move the Levites. The Agent-General for India was being harassed by Dadabhai and his friends on account of the picketing of the Vigilants. The magistrate of Gibeon was receiving daily complaints about disappearing cattle, disappearing native servants, disappearing native children. All these were being drawn, so it was said, but not invariably with truth, to the Levites on the hills.

And now here was a prominent man in Gibeon, the chairman of this and that, but principally of the Vigilance Association, which was keeping its careful eye on the Heights, here was this man charged with assault on an old German doctor who had slandered his wife. And this German doctor had slandered the prominent man's wife because he had resented being insulted in public for refusing to appear before the committee of the Vigilance Association at its command.

Everything in Gibeon, it seemed, worked round in the end to the Levites. All the Levites wanted was God, yet here they seemed to be hanging over Gibeon like an influence of the Devil. "They must be got away, they must be got away," the people of Gibeon cried, and now all South Africa was echoing their demand.

But on the Heights Aaron called his followers about him and asked them who was more powerful: God or the Government. And they answered, in deep-throated unison: God.

3

Well, they took the Bible literally. And it was right that they should do so. The Bible had been made, in

the first instance, for such as they. They were the people of the Exodus wandering in the desert. They were the servants of Nature who needed to be drawn away from that subjection by a Supernatural Master. For them was sent down divine instruction in the laws of men.

The civilised world had wandered away from the God of the Bible. Its conduct proved it had rejected that God. It would not admit as much. It hoped, by the twisting of interpretations, to link the old divinity to the new existence. Yet a child could look round and see that Holy Writ and social life had long ago parted company. And whether the fault was with the Holy Writ or with the social life made little difference. The truth remained. The two did not get on. The naked humanity of the Bible might be constant, but the clothes of humanity changed. The people of this day wanted, not a new interpretation, but a new revelation.

The needs of the Levites, however, were well met in the Testaments. Whatever their Aaron desired for his followers he could find in the Bible. And he believed what it said. He did believe it. He was a holier man than his religious instructors, who accommodated the Word to their needs. Aaron accommodated his needs to the Word.

And he was honest when he told his followers that he had seen God in person, and received his commands. For that lesser epilepsy from which he suffered caused him now and then to halt, as it were, while the flood of the world passed over him. And from these periods of arrestment, these breakings-off from life, he seemed to emerge full of divine enlightenment.

He only regretted that the utmost of his obedience

was not enough to meet the demands of the Bible. He could not embellish his tabernacle according to instruction. He could not keep up the due supply of animals for the sin offerings and the burnt offerings. These animals also were not as free from blemish as they should have been. Yet Aaron prayed that the Lord would understand how hard it was for poor Kaffirs, letting their beasts wander about the veld to breed and feed as Nature permitted, to find these perfect offerings, and would forgive them.

They all acted as best they could. But it was now six months since the Levites had done no more than keep the holy Sabbath year. The cattle kraals were gradually being emptied. The savings in money—the savings over years at the expense of cold backs and lean bellies—were terribly dwindled. The Vigilants had no need these days to picket the shops of Gibeon—the Levites could not buy very much even if they wanted to.

Aaron sometimes wondered, with an uneasy heart, whether they would be able to last out the whole Sabbath year. Yet how dared he do anything but believe God's word in the Bible? He read it, and he read it. . . . "There came a fire out from before the Lord, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces."

It was quite clear. Food must always be ready on the altar for the coming of the Lord, and any day—any day now—the Lord would appear to feed his fire with it, and in the moment of that holy gastronomy the kraals would be replenished.

It was true that, in order to link himself and his

Levites up with the ancient Writ, Aaron had to take several things for granted. But who, then, does not take things for granted on a question of religion? One must stand on air to touch the stars.

4

So when worried elders among the Levites came to Aaron, saying that the beasts were getting few in the kraals and the bellies of the people were growing close to their spines—things which Aaron knew for himself, he faced them with holy conviction.

"My brothers, do you not believe in the Lord?"

"Yes. But we are hungry. The food is small."

"My brothers, do you wish to forsake the Lord?"

"No. But the children cry."

"My brothers, do you ask me now to leave the tabernacle and lead you home again before the fulfilment?"

Home again! To what?

They stared at Aaron with helpless eyes.

He raised his hand.

" 'At the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. . . . I will meet you to speak there unto you.' My brothers, if we want it or no, we must believe now in the Lord, for nothing else will help us any more. The food is going, and there is no work. We have only the Lord left."

They wandered away from him in little groups. Much as they naturally loved idleness, the white man had now, for too many years, instructed them in the necessity of labour, and their consciences were unhappy when they lay in the shadow of the scrubby bushes—not so plentiful as they had been before the Levites

came—doing nothing but look up at the sky, searching there for the habitation of the Lord, examining with keen black eyes the changing clouds, in one of which, they had heard, he would descend to them.

And sometimes the clouds would make a great face, and here, here now, they would think, was God.

But the face would break, and would become a river with reeds beside it, or an elephant, or a springbok, or even a fish or a meerkat.

Oh, if only the Lord would come soon!

5

Sometimes there would be found now cattle in the kraals that did not look rough and raw-boned like the Kaffir cattle.

Aaron would ask questions about them, but no one could ever tell him how they had come there. Although people of many tribes were gathered under him, there was yet no man found willing to betray another's misdemeanour.

For these were not the old days when tribe lived separate from tribe, and the deeds and misdeeds of the individual were visited on the whole group: so that if one man made a fault the next man could only free himself and other innocents from responsibility by telling about it. Tribesmen might still cling together, calling one another brother, but the old rules and fealties no longer enthralled them. If a few cattle were stolen, the white man could not now come forward and blame a whole kraal for it, the affair was only between the white man's law and the criminal himself. And, in any case, as anyone could see, the white man's law was not

operating against the Levites; the Levites stayed when they were told to go, they refused to register births or deaths or report notifiable diseases, they would not give their names, they would not discuss boundaries, housing conditions, or the limits of their settlement.

When Aaron approached them, saying gravely that they must obey God's commandments, and that the commandment about stealing was very important, they conscientiously agreed with him. Nevertheless, if a cow or an ox strayed in the direction of the camp, might one not consider it to be God's intention to make the Levites a present of it? At least, there were a few Levites who tried to think so. They could hardly imagine that, in this Sabbath year, the Lord, having forbidden them to work, would, at the same time, expect them to starve.

Summer was coming now, and the mimosa-trees had yellow flowers and a soft, warm scent, and thorns. And nearly every day there were heavy storms with thunder, and the yellow dust lay close to the earth.

Mr. Kneale, the magistrate of Gibeon, and the Chief of Police again drove up to the Heights to see Aaron. The Government, said Mr. Kneale, wanted to know, once and for all, when the Levites were going.

Aaron, notified of this official visit, met the two men at the entrance of the camp, big on his horse, serene in spite of the strain of keeping order in his lean-bellied congregation, decorous although his robe of scarlet was not as sightly as it once had been.

He took the white men to his hut beside the tabernacle, down which the covering mud had run beneath the onslaught of many storms. Here and there in the camp the veld grass escaped the treading of feet and

grew in tufts; there were also the mimosa-trees and some bushes. But the resting-place of the Levites did not look as it had done in the days before they had received Heaven's command to sojourn on the Heights. Every year a few more of the trees had been cut down for firewood, and the end of this last long session would probably see the end too of all growth anywhere about the settlement.

The magistrate and the Chief of Police sat down on bentwood chairs before a deal table. There were two more such chairs and a narrow bench, about a foot deep—the plainest of benches—beneath the small window. There was a rack made of petrol-boxes, on which stood a few heavy, pink-flowered cups and saucers and plates. There were a number of religious pictures on the walls, and two goat-skins on the floor. That was Aaron's living-room. His bedroom led from it, and contained an iron stretcher, a box for a washstand, another for a table, and some more holy pictures. About a dozen yards from the house—a separate little affair—there was a shelter that did for kitchen.

Aaron stood before them in his dingy scarlet, a big and broad black man, with protruding, hot black eyes beneath his bumpy, shiny forehead, with a thick, high mouth and strong white teeth

"Will the gentlemen take tea?" he asked.

The Chief of Police, a Boer called Krige, declined in offended and offensive haste. His face flushed. Not only was he forced to the indignity of parleying with this breaker of laws, he had the impertinence—this nigger had the impertinence—to suggest that he should put his lips to a cup which black lips had touched.

Aaron remained looking at him for a moment, smil-

ing. Then he drew a third chair to the table, and sat down on it.

It was the first time ever a Kaffir had seated himself in the presence of either of these two white men. Under the whole surface of Krige's skin little nerves were alive to the affront. Mr. Kneale, the magistrate, a man not born in South Africa, could bear it better.

"Well, M'fula—" he began after a time.

"Aaron," the native corrected him.

"Well, M'fula," Mr. Kneale went on, "this business has got to end."

Aaron nodded. "It will end," he said.

"So you have been saying for the last six months. And here you still are. It's upsetting the whole country."

"We are harming no one."

"You are disobeying the laws."

"We are obeying God's laws."

"Be damned to God's laws," Krige broke in violently.

Aaron looked at the policeman with his hot, steady eyes.

"We shall go," he said, "at God's will."

The English he used was always correct, but the voice was the voice of a black man, and the pronunciation was broad and heavy. "Gawd's weel," he said, and he spoke his a's and o's like an Italian, and he could not get a th.

"You'll go at our will," said Krige.

Aaron did not answer.

"If you don't, I'll take the names of all you people on the Heights here, and the law shall follow its course."

"God has our names in his own Book," said Aaron,

and added slowly, with practical emphasis, "He has our two thousand five hundred names."

The eyes of the two white men met. He had them there. How to use legal machinery on two thousand five hundred black fanatics when there were also four and a half million other blacks in the land, and the Government afraid to stir up trouble!

"What are you waiting for?" asked Kneale at last.

"The promised Revelation."

Krige made a contemptuous ejaculation, and the burning black eyes rolled slowly round to him.

"It has been suggested," said the magistrate, "that you should be allowed free railway passes to go home."

"We cannot go home."

"Cannot?"

"Until the Revelation."

"The Revelation!"

"We are waiting for the coming of the Lord. 'At the door of the tabernacle of the congregation . . . I will meet you to speak there unto you.' . . . Do the gentlemen not believe the Word?"

"The Word! The Word!" said Krige. "Do you think the Bible was written for Kaffirs?"

"We are the Levites," Aaron declared gravely, and without rancour.

"The Levites happened thousands of years ago."

"They are happening today again."

"Who tells you so?"

"God. God has appeared to me."

"M'fula," said the magistrate, "you know how easily we could move you if we chose. A machine-gun, and where are you? But we don't want to use force. We can't blame the people who are following you; they

don't know any better. And we don't believe even you are criminal. We think you are suffering from a delusion. If we give you all free passes home, and rations on the road, and undertake to find work for as many of you as possible, won't you go quietly?"

"Force?" said Aaron. "Is there a force stronger than God?"

Krige sprang up with violence. "Come away, come away," he uttered throatily to the magistrate. "I can't stand it. If this nigger throws the word God in my face again, I won't keep my hand off him."

The magistrate remained sitting, and went on speaking quietly to Aaron.

"Now, look here, M'fula—" he said.

"Aaron," formed the black man's lips automatically, while Krige moved from one impatient foot to the other.

"Look here, be reasonable. Try to consider things like a statesman. You have put yourself in charge of these people's bodies as well as their souls. It isn't only a question of leading them to God. It's a question also of filling their bellies. I won't argue with you about your Revelation. I see that's impossible. But what is going to happen if your kraals are emptied before God appears?"

"God appears!" muttered Krige.

" 'Six years thou shalt sow thy field,' " intoned Aaron, " 'and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard and gather in the fruit thereof.

" 'But in the seventh year shall be a Sabbath of rest unto the land, a Sabbath for the Lord: thou shalt neither sow thy field nor prune thy vineyard. . . .

" 'And if ye shall say, what shall we eat the seventh year . . . ?' "

Mr. Kneale interrupted him. Only yesterday he had spoken to Old Nathan, and Old Nathan, who knew his Old Testament, had turned over the leaves of a cheap English Bible he stocked in his shop, and had read him out this very passage Aaron was quoting.

"Does God promise that he will replenish you while you are resting? Does he not say he will send enough in the sixth year to see you through? And has he done so?"

He did not see how Aaron could answer him.

Aaron's face stiffened. "The Lord will provide," he muttered, but without conviction. The policeman stood still. Had Kneale triumphed after all?

Aaron rested his head on his hand—a black hand on which the nails showed pink by contrast, and with a light-skinned palm. He lifted his eyes upwards. His face remained taut while the minutes passed. Then, as if a physical illumination had shot through the rough-thatched roof, a smile appeared on his high lips. He looked from the ceiling of his hut to the magistrate, and forgot what he wanted to forget: that the food of the sixth year would not bear them through the seventh year.

" 'Take heed to thyself,' " he spoke slowly, " 'that thou forsake not the Levite as long as thou livest upon the earth.' . . . Mr. Kneale, it is the duty of the Government to help us."

He had not before thought of the words of the Bible in this relationship, but now they came to him as a revelation. He felt that God had directly communicated them to him.

But Mr. Kneale saw other than holy things. He saw two thousand five hundred niggers (it was a word he refused, as a gentleman, to speak, but he definitely had it in his exasperated mind now), two thousand five hundred of them, lolling about on the Heights of Gibeon, while white people slaved to provide them with the necessaries of life. Yes, almost as distinctly as Aaron had his vision of the Lord, had Mr. Kneale this ludicrous vision of long convoys of ox-wagons, and long processions of cattle, beneficently climbing the Heights to the camp of the blessed blacks.

But if his thoughts were ludicrous they were encased in feelings of rage and frustration, and it was these that showed on his face.

He rose, and, politely, Aaron rose too.

"I shall communicate your answer to the Government," said Mr. Kneale shortly, and, with the Chief of Police—Aaron following them a step behind—he left the hut, and hurried towards the motor-car in which they had come.

At the whitened stones that still said "Halt! No Admittance" two black men on horseback, wearing white smocks, saluted them as they had learnt to do when they were with the Labour Contingent in France ten years ago.

CHAPTER XVI

I

"TAKE heed that thou forsake not the Levites. Take heed that thou forsake not the Levites." Captain Krige had unloosed Aaron's words on Gibeon, and they ran from one to another like a warning from heaven, like a menace from the blacks on the Heights. "They can find anything they want in the Scriptures," Krige declared, and it was true. What if they considered it their duty, their religious duty, to fall on Gibeon, to collect the Kaffir hordes of Africa and flow over all the land?

Whoever came to purchase from Old Nathan now had matter for conversation. The little somnolent town on the veld had sprung awake.

"The people are happy as before a war," Old Nathan told Saul.

Saul considered the point. "Are people happy before a war?"

"Are they not?" demanded Old Nathan, and went on musing to himself. How deeply, he wondered, were people ever grieved by misfortunes that did not affect themselves? Did one not even feel, at times, an exhilaration in one's own troubles? How alive voices became when they dealt with sorrow. "Poor Mrs. Somebody's child is not a normal child. . . . Mr. So-and-So has lost his money. His unfortunate family!" . . . The faces grew long and the words were right.

But with what a strange exhilaration the eyes shone, what a curious wickedness seemed to throw up its arms and kick out its legs and jump and dance and laugh over the conventional dolour!

Old Nathan remembered how often in his boyhood he had heard his father and mother discussing a son who gave them trouble. One parent said he was this bad thing, and the other said he was that bad thing, and they went on and went on, exciting themselves and one another with the misfortune. They would have sacrificed a great deal for that boy, but yet, in a way, they enjoyed their talk. Whenever they were dull they turned to their bitter theme; and it roused them, it angered them into a sense of life.

And wasn't this, Old Nathan pondered, something artists knew by instinct—that the contemplation of tragedy exercised the soul, drew it out, and made it grow? Was not tragedy, therefore, life-giving?

For his part, no literature satisfied him that was not grounded in irony. And he thought sometimes that might be the Hebrew history in his blood. But then the Greeks, he remembered, were the same. Only flat-soul peoples, he decided scornfully, fed on happiness—that was why they were flat-souled.

His musing eyes were on Saul. The boy was suffering in these days. There was not only the Duerden business—the expectation of unpleasant law-suits, there was also the feeling against him throughout Gibeon on account of Tetyana. Things had grown so that not only did the nurses at the hospital refuse to take orders from Tetyana, the hospital itself—inspired by the Vigilance Association—would not admit Tetyana's patients, and no doctor, except Saul, would

give him assistance. Had it not been for Saul, he could never have performed an operation in Gibeon, for there would have been no one to give the anæsthetic.

The result of this was that Saul's practice, so pleasantly descending on him from Dr. Gyde, and so warmly, after Naomi's illness, stimulated by Duerden, was thinning away among the better-class people in Gibeon, and he was regarded everywhere with suspicion.

Old Nathan, looking at Saul's cheek-bones showing more bony than ever above his hollow cheeks, felt that he could give his life to make his son happy. He lay awake sometimes a whole night worrying about him. And yet he knew he was getting a living interest from it all.

It was some sort of conflict between mind and feeling. When, as Old Nathan thought, people spoke of misfortune with sad words and high spirits, they were not being hypocritical. They really believed the things they said: that Mrs. Somebody was to be pitied because her child was not a normal child, and that it was regrettable for a family suddenly to descend from affluence to poverty. Only they did not feel them. Their reason judicially deplored, but their emotion stood invigorated like a plant in rain. . . .

"Well, you can call it happiness," said Saul. "Certainly there's excitement enough. And the Vigilants," he added as a little taunt to his father, "might still prove to be right, and we wrong. What, really, is going to happen when the Levites have eaten their last scrap of food? Who is going to control the starving fanatics?"

"Did I not say from the beginning," intoned Old Nathan, "that the Levites will not go so soon because

this is their Sabbath year? I remember standing by Duerden the day we watched them coming to the Heights, and telling him the Levites will not go this time in ten days. And Duerden answered me 'Won't they, by God!' And I said: 'It is the seventh year of their coming.' "

"Yes, but you said also that the Levites would never abandon their tabernacle for the kerrie and assegai."

"And have they?"

"Not yet. . . . But when they are starving to death, and a few miles away there are people with cattle and food?"

"Where is the Government?"

"Yes. Where?" asked Saul. And he was putting everybody's question.

2

Yet what was the Government to do? These Kaffirs had been taught to believe in the literal truth of the Bible. They had it in their blood to accept leadership. Who could convince Aaron that he had not seen God, that there was no promise? How dared he deny it to himself, affront the Unknown, and lead his people back to a nothingness both spiritual and material?

The Government sent educated natives to remonstrate with Aaron, missionaries to argue with him, officials to point out the laws. But Aaron met them in his priestly robes, he rolled his protruding yellow eyeballs at them. Particularly the missionaries, because in the early days he had been thrown out of his Church, did he meet with antagonism. His communication was

directly with God, he said, he knew no other authority; he obeyed only the laws of the Bible.

There were some who threatened to remove him. At these he laughed. "My people have given up everything for me. They know that only through me can they get back what they have lost. Let the Government help us keep our Sabbath year. Take heed that thou forsake not the Levites."

There was a growing feeling in the land that only by force and in blood would the Levites be moved from the Heights of Gibeon.

3

Arnold Duerden was drilling his Vigilants as though they were a troop of soldiery. Insensibly people were giving him again his military title that they had dropped soon after the War. Major Duerden he was now, and felt himself to be.

In a way it was good, Hermia sometimes thought, that he had this passionate interest outside his home. For despite their reconciliation there was often discomfort between them. Moments still recurred when Duerden could not be sure that Saul and his wife had never been lovers, suspicions grew in him as adhesions about a part once inflamed. And Hermia, for her part, found that she was weary of having always to propitiate her husband. Too often they spoke to one another with rancour.

There was also this business of making their triangular display of friendship. Especially in view of the approaching criminal prosecution of Duerden for his attack on Dr. Diethelm and the civil cases to follow,

were they careful to maintain publicly their old manner towards one another. But Duerden was not a subtle man, nor Saul and Hermia capable now of great harmony. In these days Saul was never, except formally, a guest in the Duerden home.

It was shortly before the day set down for the prosecution, it was in consideration of the day, that Hermia wrote to Saul: "Dear Dr. Nathan, We are having a few people and a little music next Thursday night. Will you come?"

Everyone was in evening dress. The men looked better than the women. They looked—as some of them were—gentlemen in evening dress. But the women, ladies or not, looked—except Hermia—like housemaids. They wore beaded dresses in pink or blue or mauve.

They sent for these dresses to Johannesburg. But they did not go to the good shops that sold only dresses. They went either to the little cheap shops, or else to the big department stores. And the things they got seemed never to have any glow or fall or substance. They were made of flimsy stuffs in pale colours over the thinnest of silk linings, and they were trimmed with beads. It was extraordinary how one never seemed to be able to get away from beads in the little towns on the veld.

There was a great rivalry attached to this clothes business, there was a great rivalry attached to every sort of business in Gibeon. The women eyed one another's curtains and carpets and lamp-shades. They speculated over the ingredients and construction of one another's dishes. Now lately the social leaders had all abandoned table-cloths and were using mats. They

began by explaining that it was to save expense in washing, and only the first one to do it was quite without embarrassment—the others all had the consciousness that they were copying; but quite shortly it was so much the accepted thing that there was not even a person of any importance left to comment: "I see you've given up table-cloths too!"

And on their dinner-tables they now used candles instead of the electric light which they had got only after such anxious manipulation of the town's finances, and in their drawing-rooms they shaded the lights so successfully that one had the greatest difficulty in seeing anything at all. The magistrate told his wife that he was compelled to go to bed directly after dinner because he had a reading-lamp on his bedside table from which he had ruthlessly ripped the shade, and so his bed was the only place in the house where he did not at night feel like a purblind man.

There were, of course, the other rivalries too. One asked some people to one's first-class dinners, and some people to one's second-class dinners, and some people to no dinners at all. Certain women came to afternoon tea, and with others one chatted over one's garden gate; and the young mechanic at the garage came to dances to which his sister was not invited because he was attractive to look at and could dance well. Almost anyone could belong to the Children's Welfare Society or the League of Nations branch, but the Reading Circle was very select, and the selection did not depend on any such nonsense as a passion for reading. Yes. These things were really very competently arranged in Gibeon, and hardly anybody resented the grading or discrimination.

The only person who sometimes departed from the social scheme of Gibeon was Hermia. Yet even she had to consider her husband's tastes and her guests' prejudices. It was no use being liberal in one's ideas when the recipients of one's hospitality coldly deprecated their application.

Tonight, with Saul there, with the case pending, with all the guests looking and speculating, and yet so pointedly easy and oblivious and self-contained, Hermia found Gibeon society even more difficult to bear than usual.

Hermia was as good a hostess as she was a guest. There were people who did not like her, but there were none who did not like to go to her or have her come to them. She paid. She gave herself. She sometimes felt, at the end of an evening in Gibeon, as though her spirit were fainting because she had transfused the blood of it into her thin-souled guests or fellow guests to give them life. She often wondered why she did it. "Oh, Arnold," she had begged for years, "let us not see anyone again for a long, long time. The people of Gibeon exhaust me. It's worse here than in a big town. Everything is always on top of one. I wish I were living on the loneliest island in the world. Can't we go to Tristan da Cunha?"

Arnold would look at her with the expression he reserved for exhibitions of what he disapprovingly called her temperament. "Temperament again! It's all very well for you, Hermia, going about the country on your tours, and having the best of it everywhere, to be quiet at home. But what about me? Do you think it's amusing for a man who's been to Cambridge and held a commission in France and practised at the

Johannesburg Bar to shut himself up in a place like Gibeon and never see anyone as well as never go anywhere? Isn't it rather selfish and lazy of you not to want to bother about Gibeon when it's where I live and all I've got? Is it any wonder my practice has fallen off when everyone suspects you of putting on airs? Of course, it's no secret that Gibeon bores you."

"I don't show it, Arnold," Hermia would protest, and would wonder then, in a frightened sort of way and in a great fundamental pity for her unsuccessful husband, whether it might not indeed be true that she lost Arnold clients because she did not sufficiently conciliate the people of Gibeon. "Why isn't Arnold a busy lawyer?" she had asked Saul at their first meeting—to his great perturbation—and the thing had been fresh in her mind then because only the night before Arnold had, as often, attributed his failure to her inadequacy as a lawyer's wife.

"Oh, don't you show it!" Arnold would correct her. "Nobody's such a fool as not to know when he's despised."

"I try so hard to be gay and pleasant."

"Try? That's just the trouble. You have to try. Why can't you just be natural? Why must you always emphasize that you're so clever and so different?"

"If I were natural I'd simply be sick on the rug when certain of our friends walk into the house."

Arnold would look at her in disapproval. How could she care for this obtuse, handsome failure of a man?

Or was he as a man—as a male being—not a failure, and was that his hold over her?

She would shake him with a kind of impatient ten-

derness. "Oh, Arnold, Arnold! How well we'd hit it off if only we lived on Tristan da Cunha!"

And sometimes, when she did that, his conscience would trouble him, and he would try to tell her what he knew—that there was no other woman like her in Gibeon; and tears of self-pity, and pity and love for him, would come to her eyes.

4

But that was before this Nathan-Diethelm affair. Now when, in certain moods, Arnold looked at her with hostile, suspicious eyes, she often felt she would not bear it—would go away from him.

And yet he held her by his very doubt of her.

There were, she knew, people who had a secret satisfaction in being misunderstood, in suffering injustice. They grew spiritually by their grievances. But Hermia was not one of them. She could not rest under a wrong: even the smallest one, even a little commercial affair. She could, for instance, pay liberally for what she wanted, she asked for no reductions, she craved for no bargains; but a trifling overcharge really agitated her. She brooded over it. She was as petty in this way—and she knew it—as any woman she despised.

And now here was her husband not utterly convinced of her faithfulness to him, and even while it made her feel she must get away from him, it also made her feel she must stay.

She was, she thought, like Maupassant's old man who, having picked up a piece of string, and being suspected of having found something more valuable,

for the rest of his life pursued people—even when they had lost interest in the whole affair—to explain to them that it was a piece of string and not a purse of money to which he had stooped. If ever, Hermia realised from her own experience, they had wholeheartedly believed that old man, his soul would have been freed to let him hate them, to swear at them instead of to plead with them.

There were times when Hermia, withdrawn from the attraction her husband had for her that was grounded, as much as anything, on their years of matehood, felt that, if only he would completely exonerate her, she could turn her back on him. But, before he did so, he had this power over her, he held her by this undischarged and false suspicion. . . .

Tonight she had to summon her vivacity from her deepest store to help her maintain a conventional social tone in her party. She spoke to her husband with affection, to Saul with intimate gaiety. With her husband's trial so close upon them, she suddenly tonight called him Saul. He became, as it were, the younger-brother-sort-of-person about the house. "Saul, we need another cup. . . . Saul, you know where I keep that preserve safe from Naomi. . . . Saul, will you accompany me? It's the song we practised before I went away on my last tour."

Brazenness! Was this brazenness? wondered the guests. What did Duerden think of it? Was he pleased with this Hermia-Saul relationship? Had Diethelm not made him suspect anything? And they thought again that Duerden might not be a good lawyer, but he was at least a complete man. If he was satisfied, why should they not be?

And, indeed, Duerden was nearer unquestioning happiness tonight than he had been for a long time. Everything seemed so—it was a word for which he had a reverent attachment—aboveboard. He did not like it when Saul, in an abandonment not less than his wife's, addressed her as Hermia. But he resigned himself to it. It was part of their game. Saul would soon be gone from Gibeon.

Saul himself felt a kind of angry joy in him. It did not manifest itself as naturally as Hermia's exuberance, for he was a self-conscious man. But he felt his nerves tingling under his skin. He was prepared for—he did not know what—anything.

In the old days, when he had come to visit Hermia, they had talked, even if there was a different kind of emotion behind it, of books and music and ideas and tendencies. They had never really had a gay intimacy—though that would have been safer than their seriousness, their sudden—for no apparent reason—laden silences. But tonight he became, as nearly as it was possible for him to be, the jolly pal. He had, on the other occasions when he had been compelled by their compact of a continuing friendship, suffered. There was no unhappiness in him now. He was enjoying himself. Did she hate him? Were there ugly law-cases pending? He cared for nothing.

He played for her. She had never sung so well. He had never accompanied so well. While the audience were applauding Hermia, as she was turning the leaves of a volume for another song, he looked up at her. "Hermia," he said under his breath. For the barest moment her light eyes under the straight black brows met his that were foreign and melancholy and with

points of recklessness in them. She did not know what she was feeling, except that she found it hard to disunite her gaze from his. But she did so—without a word in reply to him. "Do you really want me to sing again?" she smiled at her guests.

Saul drove home in his car, trying to interpret to himself what had happened. He had said only her name, but he had meant, shaking off a burden of conscience and doubt and injustice: "We are apart from them all. Let us be so."

Would she understand? Make a sign?

But Hermia, lying awake on the stoep, could barely keep herself from going to her heavily sleeping husband, and begging him to take her in his powerful arms—to hold her tight to his conventional mediocrity, safe from her strange thoughts and this strange man.

Never, never—she realised it fully now—had she wanted more from Saul than his feeling for her, his endorsement of her womanhood. She was, as she had ever been, Duerden's.

CHAPTER XVII

I

A FEW days later Arnold Duerden stood in the magistrate's court in Gibeon to answer the criminal charge against him.

Outside the court groups of natives in filthy European clothes were loudly talking and laughing. In the quadrangle behind it some white men, charged with theft, were walking up and down cogitating their defences. Policemen in dark-blue uniforms were chatting with one another.

The court itself was a room about thirty feet square with white-washed walls and a torn cork-linoleum on the floor. The magistrate sat on a raised platform behind a desk with a soiled green leather top. Nailed to the front of the desk, facing the court, were two placards: No smoking . . . Silence. . . . On a chair, just below the platform, sat a sergeant of police.

Facing the magistrate was the horse-shoe table, nearly the width of the room, of the attorneys. Behind the attorneys' bench were two more benches with torn imitation-leather seats. Behind these, again, was a rail dividing off a space at the back of the court for Indians and Kaffirs.

Generally there were not more than two or three strangers in court, though a number of dark folk generally lounged about against the back wall. But today

every bench was thick with people, and there were Europeans crowding out the natives.

Arnold Duerden occupied, not the dock, but a seat at the attorneys' horse-shoe table. A barrister friend from Johannesburg was defending him, and he sat between Duerden and the public prosecutor. It made Dr. Diethelm sick with a sense of injustice when he saw the barrister say something to the Prosecutor and laugh. And the Prosecutor laughed too, and even Duerden smiled. He, Diethelm, had been insulted and injured for life, and the man who was to bring the crime home to the accused was participating in a joke with him.

Even Mr. Kneale, the magistrate, turned, he felt, no indifferent eye on Duerden. And why, indeed, should he? Was he not a friend of Duerden's? Did they not play golf together? Were they not two Britons? And he, after all, a German?

He had asked his attorney, Bramson, if Kneale could be compelled to recuse himself. Bramson had made a little inherited foreign gesture. "Of course, he's a friend of Duerden's. But he's a friend of dozens of other Gibeonites too, and he knows almost everybody here. If a country magistrate had to recuse himself every time he was acquainted with the parties in a case, he would hardly be able to sit at all. Mr. Kneale would have to live in Gibeon and hear cases in other towns, and the magistrates from other towns would have to come here. Dr. Diethelm, we do get justice here. Don't be afraid."

And Mr. Kneale, as a matter of fact, was very happy to be trying this case. He enjoyed, to begin with, hearing a barrister rather than an attorney. He

was weary of fining drunken Kaffirs or the transgressors of petty by-laws, of giving judgment in matters concerning insignificant terms of imprisonment and insignificant sums of money.

Every morning, when he came into his bedraggled court, and the two or three white people and the dozen Indians and dirty natives stood up, his heart sank with a sense of boredom and futility. He felt exhilarated today as the court full of men and women—important citizens of Gibeon—rose at his entrance, and he was a little more leisurely than usual about seating himself, because he loved to see them all standing there in honour of the forces he personified. Finally he leaned back in his arm-chair, looking very unconscious indeed of everything but his duty of administering justice.

Arnold Duerden, standing in the same attitude to which he sprang when bands played "God Save the King," pleaded guilty, not to the charge of assault to do grievous bodily harm, but merely to common assault. The public prosecutor, knowing the provocation Duerden had received, accepted the plea to the minor charge, and thus exonerated Duerden from special criminal intent. Duerden's counsel asked if Duerden might retain his seat at the attorneys' table instead of going into the dock. The magistrate agreed. It was all, Dr. Diethelm thought (rage swelling in him till it seemed to be straining against the very walls of his body), all quite friendly and sociable. He, Diethelm, was the only stranger, the only outcast from this pervading amity.

What business, he asked himself fiercely, had the Prosecutor to *know* as a human being, before ever the case came to court, that Duerden had, or had not, re-

ceived provocation? Why should Duerden not go into the dock like any other criminal simply because he had a certain position in the town? Was not the only question at issue the crime as a thing in itself? Was not the court there to render justice of the most impersonal kind?

He sat at the other end of the bench beside Bramson, who was watching the case for him, he sat looking down at the table, hating to meet the eyes of the people in court, feeling that no one appreciated the wrong that had been done him, such hearing as he had left turning inwards.

Dr. Diethelm was really changed. Through the large sorrow—the dignified sorrow—of his son's death, he had stayed bulky. But the pain and humiliation at Duerden's hands, the strain of his developing deafness, his sense of the world's animus against him, the unresolved bitterness in his heart, had eaten the flesh from his bones. His big clothes hung baggily about his tall frame. His cheeks were hollow, his skin was a mottled, purplish grey. Only his eyes beneath the bushy eyebrows, above the sunken cheeks, were enlarged, made alive and searching by anger, suffering and deafness.

He went into the witness box at the call of the prosecutor, and, grasping the edge of the box, leant forward and burst into his story.

"I was standing on the stoep of the Phœnix Hotel when Duerden—when the accused—with two of his companions came up to me. I did not wish to speak to them. I am no friend of such people. I do not drink with them in clubs. I—"

The prosecutor restrained him, and began putting him formal questions.

"Do you know the accused?" he asked baldly.

Dr. Diethelm inclined his sound ear towards the prosecutor, and the prosecutor repeated his remark in a shout.

"Do I know the accused?" Dr. Diethelm looked blankly at the prosecutor. Did he know the accused!

"Just answer the question, please, Dr. Diethelm."

"I know the accused," said Dr. Diethelm roughly.

"He has pleaded guilty to assaulting you. Will you tell the court what he did to you?"

Dr. Diethelm burst again into his story.

"I was standing on the stoep of the Phœnix Hotel—"

"You have already told us that, Dr. Diethelm," the magistrate intervened.

Dr. Diethelm looked at him a moment in silence. The interruption had made him lose his thread.

"Just explain exactly what happened," the prosecutor helped him. There was a suggestion of sympathy in his voice, and Dr. Diethelm's questing eyes sought his with a momentary relief.

"Duerden complained because I had not obeyed his summons to appear before the Vigilance Committee meeting."

His voice, beginning on a loud note, ended almost inaudibly through nervous passion. The magistrate asked him to speak up. Diethelm stared at him as at an enemy.

"Did you answer him?" continued the prosecutor.

"No. I did not answer him."

"You said nothing at all?"

"At first I said nothing."

"What happened then?"

"He accused me—" his face paled, and the pouched, wrinkled circles round his eyes darkened, "Duerden accused me of unprofessional conduct."

"Unprofessional conduct. Of what nature?"

"He said—he suggested—that I have touted for work among the Levites. . . . Because my native interpreter was a friend of them."

And, in fact, there was a basis of truth in this. The interpreter had induced some of the Levites to come to Dr. Diethelm. And he knew it, and, in his spiritual weariness, had succumbed to it. Yet that another man should put the thing in words filled him with indignation and a sense of injury.

"You protested?" said the prosecutor.

"I asked them if that was their business, and Duerden—"

"Yes?"

"Duerden insulted me."

"What did he say?"

Dr. Diethelm did not answer at once. He seemed to be staring through the walls of the court.

"Yes. What did he say?"

Dr. Diethelm moved his hands from the edge of the box, and clutched at his loosely hanging coat.

"He said: 'Diethelm, no lip.'"

For weeks that expression, as it had issued from Duerden's contemptuous mouth, had been running about his mind. He, an old man, a professional man, a man who had lost his only son: "Diethelm, no lip!"

"Did you reply to him?"

"No. I tried to push past him. I could not stand still to be offended in a crowd of people."

He remembered the interested spectators of his ignominy.

"You tried to push past him. And what did the accused do then?"

"He stopped me. He told me not to be so rough. He said he had a warning to give me. I answered—"

Everyone saw Duerden whisper something to his counsel. The counsel rose hurriedly to his feet.

The prosecutor sat down.

"Is all this necessary, your worship?" asked the counsel. "It is only, I submit, a question of proving the actual nature and extent of the injuries inflicted on Dr. Diethelm."

The magistrate agreed with him.

"Let us come to the facts," he said to the prosecutor.

Dr. Diethelm stared with his painful, dark-ringed eyes from the magistrate to the prosecutor, from the prosecutor to the defending counsel. He only passed over, as if it were a blinding reflection, Duerden's heavy-jowled, red-brown face. What did they mean: was all this necessary? . . . Let them come to the facts. . . . Were these not facts? Was he to be thrust down, a deeply injured man, as if he were nothing but an obtrusive and babbling old fool?

"I answered," he shouted suddenly, "that I had a warning to give too."

The defending counsel said something, but he did not hear his words. The magistrate turned to him sharply:

"Dr. Diethelm, will you wait for the questions of the public prosecutor before you speak, and then answer them as concisely as possible? It is the business of the prosecutor to lay such facts as he thinks rele-

vant to the case before the court, and his questions to you will be directed to that end."

Dr. Diethelm was full of desperate revolt as the magistrate sat there speaking with a sense of portentous satisfaction. It was, he thought, because he was a German. What did they all really care about Mrs. Duerden's good name? Did they not *know* he had spoken the truth?

He leaned forward in the box, and, with a pale face and expanded nostrils and eyes curiously lightened in colour, he said slowly and loudly in his flatly twanging Teuton voice: "I told him to look out for his wife and the Jew."

At the word "Jew" Bramson looked unhappy. He could not decide whether to regard the term as an offence or a description. But he made up his mind on the spot to consider Diethelm, not as a human being, but as a client.

There was a hush in court, and then a quick murmuring.

"Silence!" cried a policeman in a tone of resonant enjoyment.

The defending counsel, who was still on his feet, addressed the magistrate.

"This is something, your worship, which the Crown's acceptance of a plea of common assault would, we hoped, save us from bringing forward. In these circumstances it is regrettable that the witness should have persisted in mentioning it, though I quite realise that the prosecutor is not to blame."

He sat down. Duerden looked straight before him with glazing eyes. He knew the things people were whispering. It was different—it was intolerable—to

hear them shouted. By God, he would make Diethelm pay for this. The magistrate spoke again. He was rebuking Dr. Diethelm. But Dr. Diethelm, leaning heavily against the side of his box, was listening only to the echo of his own words. He was glad, he thanked Heaven, that he had spoken them. He felt purged.

He answered the perfunctory questions the prosecutor put him concerning the blows he had received like a man in a trance; really, the people thought, like an idiot.

But, after all, everything was now an anti-climax: the evidence of the district surgeon on the subject of Dr. Diethelm's injuries, the Johannesburg barrister's address to the court, the question of sentence, even the sentence itself.

The magistrate hardly looked up as he spoke.

"Twenty-five pounds or a month's imprisonment with hard labour," he said quickly. And Duerden paid his fine, and walked home with his solid, close-shaven jaw set hard.

2

"Twenty-five pounds or a month," said Dr. Diethelm to Bramson as Bramson drove him home in his car. "Twenty-five pounds or a month!"

A man could get six months or two years, according to whether he had one conviction or more, for giving a coloured person in the Transvaal a drink of liquor, and for what had been done to him—twenty-five pounds or a month!

He seemed to be able to utter no other words as they drove home. He linked them to the sacking of

his surgery and the death of his son as well as to the blows of Duerden. But he still heard himself saying: "his wife and the Jew," and he still thanked Heaven for it.

Bramson told him that he had alienated the court's sympathy by his conduct, and various other things, but he did not listen to Bramson's words. They arrived home, and Bramson helped him into his dingy house, and poured him a glass of brandy. Who else was there in Gibeon to do anything for Dr. Diethelm except the man whose advice he bought? His elder daughter, who was married to a German missionary in the Northern Transvaal, was about to have another child. His second daughter was travelling in Europe. He stood as solitary as a cenotaph.

"You have your civil remedy, Dr. Diethelm," said Bramson.

He had not wished to speak at this stage about lawsuits. Dr. Diethelm, he could see, was near collapse. But the old man held him by his sense of wrong.

"I didn't," he added, "expect anything very satisfactory from the criminal prosecution."

"Justice!" said Dr. Diethelm, sitting on his ancient, sunken sofa. "Is this justice?" And the tears he had not shed when he lost his son came now into his eyes and ran down his cheeks. He felt like the sole defender of justice in all the world, and he felt, at the same time, like a weak, weak old man who now at last must yield and cry.

Bramson walked away and stood staring at the fly-marked calendar hanging on the long black nail. The flaps had not been torn off for two months. He brought the calendar up-to-date.

He remembered how Dr. Diethelm had said: "His wife and the Jew," and how something in himself had stirred uneasily at the word. Why? he wondered. An Englishman would not stand taut at the word "Englishman." But then, thought Bramson again, if, for some reason or other, an Englishman had to subdue his peculiar quality or otherwise suffer for it, the word "Englishman" might seem to him, too, a danger-sign.

On the other hand, could a Jew do business only with such as had no animus against him, and hope to live?

Bramson told himself now that he would remember Dr. Diethelm's words against him. Yes, one day— He often comforted himself thus by thoughts of revenge. He gave faithfully the work for which he was paid. But yet he withdrew, as it were, his heart from it, and dreamt of a time when he would be able to show he had not forgotten this or that.

He thought that as long as he kept his anger divided from his living, it did not matter where he yielded his services. But, indeed, the day never seemed to come for the revenge that was to repair his self-respect. Bramson fooled himself as all those fool themselves who believe that their seeming and their being are two different things. He did not realise how easy it was for the rag-doll to take comfort in her beautiful soul, the village poet in his unacclaimed Miltonic stature, the Negro in his white heart. One might believe anything one chose if one had not to prove it. How was the virtue confirmed that remained hidden, untested, unendorsed?

The essence of Bramson's revenge was lost since he did not declare it, and, if necessary, suffer for it. His

unmanifested pride raised him in no one's estimation. If such work as he could do was acceptable to any who despised him, they might well ignore the unseen resentments that would moulder to earth with his bones.

On top of everything there was a lazy good-heartedness in Bramson that made it hard for him to cherish an indignation. Even while he was determining to remember his grievance against Dr. Diethelm, he turned and saw a broken old man from whom it was not worth while to exact a penalty—unless, indeed, he debited him with his pity.

He waited for Dr. Diethelm to say something.

Dr. Diethelm sucked his lips together in an effort at self-control.

"I'd better come and see you tomorrow," said Bramson. "You're done up now."

Dr. Diethelm shook his head.

"Well, what do you want me to do, then?" asked Bramson.

"Sue for damages," whispered Dr. Diethelm.

"You know Duerden has no money. You can get nothing from him. He will simply assign his estate. Though, of course—" he paused.

Dr. Diethelm looked at him through his thickened, wrinkled lids.

Bramson went on.

"After what happened in court Duerden may feel there's nothing more to be hushed up and will sue you for defamation."

"Let him."

"So, of course, may Nathan."

"Nathan will never," said Dr. Diethelm in a heavy, convinced voice.

"How do you know?"

"He will never," he repeated, and he felt—it gave him a terrible fright—as though he were speaking of his dead son. "I know."

He stared at Bramson in a strange, ghostly fashion. Let Duerden sue him, bring the question of his wife's reputation to court. Much there would be left of that reputation even if Duerden won.

He spoke: "Go on with the claim for damages. I do not care what Duerden does. I will yet see that man bankrupt in everything."

CHAPTER XVIII

I

So now Dr. Diethelm sued Duerden for two thousand pounds' damages for assault: general damages for personal disablement, pain and suffering, contumelia, loss of the amenities of life; special damages for loss of earning and medical expenses.

Duerden, admitting the assault, but denying its severity and the extent of the damages, counterclaimed two thousand pounds for defamation. By good luck it was possible to set down the case early: it would be heard in Pretoria in November, towards the end of term.

In the meantime Saul was still the nominal friend of the Duerdens.

He often wondered, staring at his father's high-browed, meditative face, what Old Nathan would say if he knew of the doubly treacherous thoughts that were running about his head: his thoughts of a married woman, his racial unconcern. Old Nathan, subtle and cynical in so many ways, was, when it came to matters of sex and blood, still tied to the traditions of his ancestors. To look at a woman already married, to look at a woman outside his faith, were to him actions fundamentally horrible.

He said to Saul, after the case in the magistrate's court:

"Perhaps you would like to give over your practice to someone else and go away."

If it needed anything to stiffen Saul, it was this. His father's suggestions generally aroused in him a feeling of opposition. He was full of the filial hostility which Moses had understood so well that he had made the honouring of fathers and mothers—like other things that do not come by nature—a matter of law.

"Why should I like to go away?"

"Is it here pleasant for you, then?"

"It is neither pleasant nor unpleasant. I am simply not concerned."

"But you are concerned. You are not happy now in Gibeon."

"I am as happy here as I would be anywhere else."

"The people are talking and you have no friends."

"Have you?"

"I?" said Old Nathan, surprised at the unexpected idea that he should not be lonely. "I am a different thing. I am an old man. I have had my life."

Saul thought of what a barrenness that life had been—the old inquirer leaning against the wooden pole of his silly little shop waiting for someone—for anyone—against whose mind he might strike his own to generate a living spark.

"You and I are friends," he said.

It was the first time he had ever said such a thing to his father. Old Nathan, moved and embarrassed, shook his head.

"That is enough for me, but not for you. You still visit the Duerdens?"

"Yes," said Saul, and the returning hardness in his voice pushed his father away again.

Yes, he still visited them. But why? What did he get out of it—this partnership with the Duerdens to maintain the Duerden reputation? He decided that he would not bear it any longer.

He telephoned to Hermia and went to see her. She received him in the worn, untidy, comfortable living-room in which they had first met. But it was October now—springtime. The windows were open, and from the garden next door—the too-near, next-door garden of little villages—there came the scent of broom. And everywhere about them were flowers which Hermia had taken special pains to arrange. For whatever impression Saul made on her, she was still concerned about the impression she made on him.

She even wore a new dress. It was of a soft, thick silk—not fragile at all, she hated materials that looked fragile, she had no feeling for little, delicate things—and it was of a tone of green that made her eyes look green too and that lightened her skin.

As soon as she saw him it was clear to her that he had come with a deliberate purpose. That interested her. That pushed out of sight the antipathy she had for him when she thought of her husband and the people of Gibeon imagining a special connection between them. She again wanted him to have a regard for her womanhood, even if only to hurt his manhood. She smiled at him in the old evocative way, and, looking at her, he paled and said directly:

"Mrs. Duerden, I think we must come to a fresh understanding."

He had not again, since the night of the party, called her Hermia.

"Let us have tea before we talk," she put him off,

and she thought to herself that they always seemed to have tea at a crisis.

"Are you having some yourself?"

"Yes. Don't you want any?"

"Not unless—am I not rather late for tea?"

"Of course not. Wait. I'll get Silence to make some."

More strongly than ever was Saul reminded of their first meeting when she had come towards him, a stranger, in a manner of quick intimacy. They were both strange and intimate today, he felt.

She began to speak of various things: music, a native war-dance she had seen, and, in a natural transition, the Levites.

"I hear they have no food left. Do you know anything about it?"

"I have been called in once or twice to see patients."

"You must be the only white man who goes there except on some official mission."

"I believe—" he was going to say, "I believe Diethelm has been," but he could not bring himself to speak Diethelm's name. "Perhaps, in these days," he answered, accurately enough, for Diethelm had not resumed practice.

"And how did you find things?"

"They are certainly beginning to suffer."

"But what is to be the end of it? Don't you talk to them? Don't you explain that they will all die of starvation while they are waiting for the Lord to come?"

"Tetyana has spoken to them about that. Some of the less devout believers are beginning to grumble. There have even been a few deserters. But Aaron's

honour is involved in the matter now. He regards himself as their prophet. A miracle is his only hope. What will he be—what will become of his power and holiness—if, after all this waiting, and after they have eaten up their cattle and their savings, he can do nothing but tell his people to trek back home?"

"But how long does he think he can fool them?"

"He dare not think any more. It does happen like that. Have you ever noticed how embezzlers who, in the beginning, took money with the idea that they would one day repay it, afterwards go on embezzling when they haven't the faintest idea of how they can continue to hold off discovery? I sometimes wonder with what illusions they deceive themselves when to a reasonable person it is clear the end is upon them. I suppose what they must do very often is to decide to make a final gamble of it—shares or horses, with suicide as an alternative. And then, if the gamble doesn't come off, they haven't the pluck to kill themselves, and simply wait helplessly for the law to take them. . . . Until, one day, in the middle of some extravagant celebration, they are arrested. I knew an embezzler once who bought himself an expensive motor-car on the very eve of having to explain what had become of fifteen thousand pounds of trust money. He didn't run away. He didn't attempt a recuperative gamble. He just went on spending money and buying things he knew he wouldn't be able to use in a week or so—as if he were bewitched."

"That sort of thing happens in wars too," said Hermia. "The fighting going on after everything is lost."

"Perhaps because everything is lost. There seems nothing to stop for. What will Aaron gain if he leaves

the Heights now? In the meantime, he can at least trust in his reading of the Bible. A miracle isn't dependent on ordinary calculations."

The boy Silence came in with the tea. Hermia, who, while Saul had seemed the soft scapegoat of the Duerden vindication, had despised him, was now not unpleasurably excited by what she felt to be a change coming. Did he want to approach nearer? She must see about that! Did he want to give up? She couldn't allow it! She could not tell—she actually could not—what she felt until she knew what he felt.

They went on talking over tea. He spoke slowly and calmly, but his heart was beginning to bump so that he barely heard his own words.

He said suddenly, without relation to any previous remark:

"Mrs. Duerden, about what I wanted to say. About this arrangement of ours."

A bubble burst in his ears; his heart, as far as he felt, gave up beating; he waited for Hermia to speak as if his body were marooned in a sea of silence.

She answered him:

"Yes, tell me."

"We used to be something like friends," he said.

She looked at him without either accepting or rejecting his statement. He thought of the real intimacy there had been between them, and tried to reconcile it with her silence now. Did she so hate to recall that they had been—something like friends?

"Then there was what happened outside the Phœnix Hotel."

He paused.

"Mrs. Duerden," he went on after a moment, "you

may know it, or you may not, but I am not terribly experienced with women. There is a great tradition—and particularly in these days—that men have to be hearty animals, just as there is a lot of contempt attached to the term 'elderly virgin.' But I—" He broke off. She nodded and slightly shivered.

He did not finish that sentence, but after a time he began speaking again in a low voice, almost as if he were explaining something to himself.

"Sex," he said, "is, in our day, a rampant subject. And not less in intellectual circles than in others. I don't complain of it—I don't say it's so unjustly. We are made by the agency of sex, and, for all I know, may really be nothing *but* sex. Only I—I am not, as you can see, a very hearty animal. I am not a full-blooded, active type of man. My father told me once that the desert and the sea and the air were not conquered by such as he, and I suppose I am my father's son. He said at the time that they were—" the colour rose heavily to his high cheek-bones, but he continued —"that they were conquered by the Duerdens of the world."

At this Hermia flushed too. Could he mean that? Could a man be so detached?

She murmured something about other conquests.

"Perhaps," said Saul. "What I mean—what I am trying to explain—is that I am the sort of person who carries on gallant adventures in his head, and I have sometimes envied the men who find them in the flesh. Am I boring you? I won't again."

"No," said Hermia quickly, and she wondered how he was leading up to an inclusion of herself in this

confession, and what he meant by "I won't again."

"No. Please go on."

He held out his cup. "Is there any more?"

Hermia touched the tea-pot. "Yes, but cold. Let me make some fresh tea."

She went into the kitchen herself. They both felt the necessity of an interlude. Hermia thought again how she and Saul always, at interesting moments, seemed to make what on the stage they called "business" with cups and tea-pots. Well, what else so convenient inside a house?

She wondered why she did not, at this moment, hate Saul as she had done ever since the Diethelm trouble. Was it because there was finality in the air? Was this why she had dressed herself with special attention? Was here a climax?

He smiled at her slightly as she returned. He had been feeling his pulse while she was out of the room. It interested him to note that it was quite normal now, but he did not think it strange that he should be testing himself like this. People did have these detached moments of self-consideration on the verge of critical experiences.

"Thank you," he said. "You want me to go on? I may tell you anything?"

"Everything," she answered, and smiled too, exhilarated by the promise of revelation.

"Being such as I am," went on Saul, "I met you."

"And were immediately frightened of me," said Hermia, suddenly, at the inclusion of herself in his story, coming forwards to vivify his explanation.

"Frightened. Yes. And it made me ashamed that you knew it, and I tried to re-instate myself in your

good opinion by refusing to join the Vigilants because you were against them."

"I remember you told me so once. It gives me something to answer for."

"But you made me feel as no other woman had ever made me feel. You were so—I think 'quick' is the word. Quick in both senses: swift and alive."

Hermia recalled how, for months, even when she loved her husband, she had not been able to keep this man from her thoughts, how she had had a passion of interest in him. She felt something of that passion reviving now. It was a sort of game. He was telling her these things because it was the end. Should she let it be the end? The exhilaration it is to a woman to count with a man warred with her principles and reason.

"We had a good deal in common," Saul continued. "We could talk. I would have been lonely in Gibeon but for you. You sometimes told me—"

"Yes. That I would have been lonely but for you."

"You said—you don't mind my repeating it?—"

"No."

"As it's the last time . . ."

So he meant it, indeed, for the last time. Hermia, on the verge of a loss due to another impulse than her own, felt a pang. Nevertheless, since he said "the last time" she could not, in so many words, contradict him.

"Death-bed confession," she smiled.

"You told me you couldn't talk to your husband."

It was true. She had told him so. Duerden drew her, as it were, by gravity. His thickness, both of mind and body, gave him mastery over her. She was

volatile, and she felt the need of his heaviness to keep her steady.

"And," said Saul, "I had a conception of the two of us as—"

He hesitated.

She waited.

"Something more intimate than such a husband and wife as Duerden and you could be to one another."

"I was wrong," he added after another pause. "Nothing can be more intimate than physical marriage. When it came to the point, you were his and not mine."

He stood up, and went to the window through which the scent of the broom came. Hermia's eyes followed him. He was tall, but his shoulders were too high and narrow, he looked weak. Hermia thought of her husband's powerful back and firmly planted legs. And Saul's head was round and black, but her husband's ran straight from crown to red neck covered with vigorous, wavy, red-brown hair. Yes, he was more of a man than this talking Jew who said he wasn't active. Her contempt for him began to be renewed. She could not visualize herself as being, in any physical sense, drawn to him.

He turned round. "Well, but, of course, a different kind of man would not have allowed Duerden that hold on you."

She had been thinking the same. Again their thoughts had sprung together.

He leaned against the window-sill, his hands hard against it. The sun was setting, and the sky was a sea on which a fleet was burning away in flames and great smoke, while icebergs floated by. Behind the

fires of the ships land could be seen—a bank of rust-red dykes, and above these rust-red dykes was another and more peaceful heaven of clean, clear green, and pale, pale blue, and deeper blue. Against this heaven and the burning heaven rolled black clouds of smoke. And far away from both a little weak, useless-looking, milk-blue half-moon floated mistily along.

The colours in the sky deepened. The sea of flame reddened. The icebergs became grey, the rust-red dykes purple. The green faded. The blue darkened. The room grew dim. Now Hermia could not see Saul's face at all.

"It was not," he said, "that I did not think about it."

Think about it—about not allowing Duerden—!

Despite her adjudications of a moment ago, she was not calm now. The top of her head felt, somehow, lifted. Little nerves all over her body were awake. She had a feeling of disintegration within.

She wondered what she would answer if he suddenly asked her: "And if I had told you what I thought?"

She broke the silence that followed by saying, in a voice light yet not steady: "But in the end you will marry a girl of your own race and have a family of little Jews, and forget—all this."

She wanted him to deny it. He stood meditating.

"I suppose so," he agreed. "Most dully married men must have some sort of romantic experiences at the back of their lives, and if they don't forget them entirely they smile at them as at a pleasant, silly little old memory. How can an ancient dream compete with the actuality of marriage? I haven't much belief in

the old stage-gentleman who falls asleep over a fire and re-lives the romance of his youth."

Hermia looked at his shadowed form with a compound of feelings, the most distinct of which was chagrin. She respected, but, more, she resented, his realism. It was all very well for her to put forward a picture of his future in which she did not enter at all, but it wasn't for him so reasonably to accept it. She had meant to be, not prophetic, but provocative.

He returned to his easy-chair beside the tea-table.

"When are you expecting your husband home?"

"He will be at the club for a sundowner just now."

"Then may I stay a few moments longer? I haven't yet asked you what I came to ask you."

"I thought we had settled your whole future."

"There is the present," said Saul.

The words revived Hermia. She had, for many weeks, been nourishing a feeling of animosity against Saul. But the idea that he could calmly envisage an existence in which she took no part filled her now with a sense of loneliness and betrayal.

The twilight, the swift African twilight, was giving way to darkness. Hermia wondered if she should put on the light—just the little further light over the piano. She wanted to see his face, and yet she found the dimness exciting.

Saul spoke.

"My question cancels some of the things I have been saying. Shall I put it?"

"Yes," she answered, "put it."

"Do you hate me irrevocably?"

She felt herself genuinely moved. Perhaps it was the growing darkness.

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"I don't hate you."

"You did—two hours ago. You have—ever since the Diethelm business."

"Yes," she admitted.

"Why?"

Why! Could she explain how, when she thought of him in comparison with her husband, she had an absolutely primitive resentment that anyone might imagine she had gone from the stronger to the weaker man. She often wondered at herself. For she knew that, like many robust women with robust minds, she had an inclination towards the sort of man she could subjugate and who could yet arouse her curiosity: the sensitive, artistic, wistful, rather unsuccessful type of man that naturally leaned on a woman's strength. Most of the men who had ever appealed to her had been like that. Saul was like that. This very inactivity in him, of which he was himself aware, his racial handicap, his melancholy cast—these things, coupled with the community of their interests, had drawn her to him.

But yet there were limits to an attraction founded on curiosity and the desire of conquest. There were men she had loved to meet, and to whom she had given her passionate concern, who, when she saw them matched bodily against stronger or more adept men, had shamed her in terms of the common eye. If they danced, and danced badly; if they played games, and played them incompetently; if they could not sit a horse or manage a motor-car, they betrayed her womanhood by the weakness of their manhood.

Thus Saul had made her despise herself when she visualised their connection as it must appear to a de-

risive world. It was true there was the other fact that, as everyone knew, her husband could not support her, so that there was often wonder as to how long she would bear to go on keeping the big swaggerer's home together for him. But, in this sexual battle, all that now seemed of little consequence. It was just a question of which of the two men made her more strongly feel his manhood.

But she could not tell Saul this, with the fear on her that she was on the point of losing him. Whatever had been in her mind these many weeks past, now she did not want to lose him. Perhaps it was the darkness. Perhaps it was his manner of withdrawing himself. A thing one was prepared to throw away attained immediately, by the threat of its forcible removal, a spiritual value.

Whatever her thoughts, the situation was genuinely affecting her.

Saul did not speak for a moment. Then he said, as if from a distance: "If you don't hate me—if there is the present—"

His voice sank almost to nothing. The room became completely silent. Hermia's mind seemed to come to a standstill. What did he mean? She could not tell or ask. They sat there, in the dark, without movement and without speech. Perhaps they were happy. . . .

A new noise added itself to the little evening noises of the world outside, a strong, regular sound.

Hermia leaped up and switched on the light.

She saw Saul blinking in the sudden brilliance. Emotion clear and unguarded was on his face.

"For heaven's sake," she said.

She was awake to the world again, and fiercely.

He looked at her, dazed.

"Do something," she cried.

He made an effort to match her swift transition.

"Dr. Nathan—Dr. Nathan—" she said urgently.

The strong, regular sound changed its note and beat. It ceased to be associated with level earth. It spoke now of a stepping upward on to a harder surface. The half-glass door which led from the Duerden's living-room to their stoep was opened, and Arnold Duerden came in.

He looked from his wife to her companion. And then back again. And so remained deliberately staring.

Saul, as if in a dream, stood up. But he was regaining control of himself.

Hermia was the first to break the silence. She forgot that there had been no greetings exchanged at all.

"Any news of the Levites, Arnold?" she said quickly.

Her husband did not answer her. He was standing straight, immovable, and in absolute silence. Saul thought that there was really something magnificent about the man. Then he added the word "fool" to his description. "Magnificent fool," he thought again.

No one spoke now. And they all three knew that there would be speaking very soon. They realised the hush of preparation. Over Duerden there came a sense of triumphant power.

At last Saul took a step forward.

"Well," he began, without any clear idea of what he could say next.

Duerden made the smallest possible upward ges-

ture with his big hand. "Wait a bit." He turned to his wife. "This room was in absolute darkness a moment ago. The light was put on as I came up the path."

"Yes," answered Hermia quite coolly now, "I heard you coming."

Duerden wanted to say something very effective. His body, throat, face, swelled with the abortive effort.

"You are not going yet, Dr. Nathan?" Hermia said pleasantly to Saul.

Duerden made a movement towards Saul.

Saul stood still as men do when they are helpless and yet defiant before impending violence. His face, as always under stress, was greenish. But he found his voice, and words.

"No. I see you want an explanation, Duerden. I came to tell your wife that I can't go on with this arrangement of ours."

Not greatly to Saul's surprise, the term Jew and the term liar came simultaneously to Duerden's mind, and he used them together.

"Do you allow me to say more, Mrs. Duerden?" asked Saul.

"Anything you like," she replied.

"I was about to ask your wife if she found it possible to live with you," said Saul to Duerden.

Duerden took another step towards Saul, grasped his arm, swung him round, and, with a movement of shoulder and hip and knee, jerked him out through the open half-glass door, and locked it.

Saul staggered to the edge of the stoep, and then, beside himself with rage and humiliation, rushed back to the door. Through the glass top of it, in the lit-up

room, he saw Duerden's contemptuous face. Beside the chair, where she had stood all the time, Hermia remained immovably horrified.

If he had been capable of clear thought now, it would not have comforted Saul to remember that Duerden was a fool. But he was beyond thought. In an abandonment of passion he flung his fists through the glass of the door, broke the glass, cut his hands, struggled against the lower wooden half with all the weight of his body, no impulse in him but to get at Duerden. Duerden remained simply looking at him.

The thrusting, bleeding hands woke Hermia. She pushed past her husband to the door to open it. He held her back. Nothing human seemed to have power against the strength of his body.

She tried to free herself. "Arnold. You can't. You can't," she cried.

He held her still. "So Diethelm was right, after all," he said. "Well, when the case is over, when I've finished with Diethelm, you can go, he can have you. In the meantime—" he released her suddenly in a spasm of disgust—"you'll know you're my wife."

He looked again at Saul, turned on his heel, and walked out through the further door of the room.

CHAPTER XIX

I

Saul did not go home till nearly morning.

"Is that you, Saul?" his father called out as he came in.

"Yes," said Saul. There was finality in his voice, and his father dared not ask more.

For an hour Saul had walked round the Duerden house, wild with the feeling that he must do something. He had gone then to a narrow spruit between banks of trees, that in summer ran with three or four feet of water, and in winter was dry. There was water in it now, and he washed his hands. He lay on the young grass goading himself with thoughts of destruction, and yet with the knowledge beneath everything that he could never translate those thoughts into action.

He had returned home, gone into his room, attended as best he could to his wounds, and lain down, dressed, on his bed. . . .

Milk had been delivered; the little town was stirring; vegetable wagons, drawn by oxen, were creaking and rumbling down the streets; there was heard now and then a human cry; it was almost time for the native to bring the tea, when, wondering if there was such a thing as oblivion in the world, Saul fell asleep.

At nine o'clock his father looked through his window and saw him sleeping like that in his clothes. He did not notice his hands. He moved softly away again,

and had by himself the breakfast which he had kept waiting for his son's sake. He knew that something had happened, but what it was he could not imagine.

It was nearly midday when Saul awoke, feeling a distress that culminated in his hands. They throbbed, and were swollen.

He stood before his looking-glass and gazed at himself with contempt—at his melancholy, helpless eyes, the stubble on his pale face, his bandaged hands, his soiled and crumpled clothes. And, as he gazed, he set his memory of Duerden beside his own reflection, and he despised himself with Duerden's contempt as well as his own.

"Yes, if a man must lose his wife, let it be to a man," he thought, and sympathised with Duerden's mortification in seeing Hermia turning, as he supposed, from himself to such a figure as now faced Saul in the glass.

And he sat down again on his bed, and his eyes burned saltily in his unwashed face. And so, for nearly another hour, he remained sitting.

Then he heard his father's knock on the door.

"Are you well, Saul?" asked Old Nathan.

"Yes," he replied.

"Will you come to lunch?"

"Yes," said Saul.

"Must I wait for you."

"Yes, wait for me."

2

He shaved, bathed and changed, and came in to lunch. He had composed himself to face his father.

He now showed him his hands. "This is not an accident," he said. "But don't ask me to explain what happened."

"I must ask," said Old Nathan. "Tell me."

"No," said Saul.

The native brought in soup and then chicken.

"You're not eating," said Old Nathan.

"Oh, yes, I'm eating well enough," said Saul, and added: "You asked me yesterday" (was it, indeed, only yesterday!) "if I would like to hand over my practice to someone else and go away. I've been thinking it over. Perhaps you are right."

And he rose suddenly from his chair and walked out of the room.

But in the afternoon there came to him a little Kaffir boy with a note. It was very short. "Dear Saul," said Hermia, "I am leaving Arnold today. Here is my future address. Write to me."

He had a vision before his eyes of Hermia gazing in horror while her husband with shoulder and hip and knee pushed him from the room, gazing with horror still as he smashed his wild and stupid hands through the glass door. He felt that he could never face her again. He felt that he did not want to. She was the very mirror of his shame. He could more easily—a hundred times more easily—meet again her husband.

He tried to tell her so, and, at the end of an afternoon spent in crumpling up sheets of paper, decided that he had nothing to say to her.

He decided, too, that now, after all, he would not leave Gibeon.

3

When people asked Duerden where his wife was he told them that the approaching trial had got on her nerves, and she had decided to take a holiday.

Now he got up early in the mornings and saw that the child was dressed, fed, and prepared for school. He was accustomed to doing this because, for many years now, Hermia had been going away on her concert tours. And, indeed, he and Naomi had a great companionship and mutual understanding. They looked alike too, with their faces that were an even, deep colour, and their red-brown hair and red-brown eyes and big, strong limbs. Duerden forgot all his arrogance when he was with Naomi. He became, in addition to the fact that he was so wonderfully accomplished and knew more about all the important things in the world than anyone else's father, her particular friend.

For Duerden's arrogance was largely a protest against a society that honoured him only in its leisure moments. Although his heart was in his games and his chairmanships, he was often full of bitterness against the people who were heartily prepared to let him do only such work as they could trouble a man to do without payment. "Oh, yes," he often thought to himself, "I am good enough to arrange their tournaments and their entertainments. I am a useful man at a club or a meeting. But if they need to employ a lawyer they run to the Jews."

What he did not appreciate was that he really was good at tournaments and meetings and things of that sort, but not in an office. He had no legal head and

no business head. He could not see two sides of a case. His clients—simply because they were his clients—always seemed to him to be unquestionably in the right. He gave them enthusiastic and provocative advice—with results that he could only describe as unlucky.

But he imagined it was all just a kind of conspiracy against him. "They think," he told himself, "that, because I do all these outside things, I am not a man to be taken seriously," and he sometimes wondered if he shouldn't bring them to their senses by suddenly and pointedly telling them that he didn't belong to the idle rich, and couldn't afford to give them so much of his time, and that they could go elsewhere for someone to organise their amusements and civic activities.

But, then, what if they simply accepted his resignations, did find someone else to organise their amusements and activities, and left him a workless nobody, not only inside, but also outside, his profession? He visualised this or that man taking his abandoned posts—he visualised him with contempt, but also with jealousy. These social jobs, he hotly felt then, were his perquisites.

He took it out of the people of Gibeon by driving them ruthlessly before him where he had the power, and, so far from declaring that he had his living to earn, he confronted them in the manner of one who was, by his own will, not the cringing, client-seeking professional—not in anything, even his own work, a man who needed their money—but simply the noble, the haughty, the perpetual amateur.

His arrogance, then, was a question of maintaining his balance. He tried to redress, by the weight of his

manner, the insufficient importance society attached to him.

But he did not need to be arrogant with Naomi. He could add nothing to her conception of him. She already thought him the greatest man in the world. She felt a condescension towards all her friends because they had such inferior fathers—ugly, bald fathers who simply went to work and came back home, who could not play games, and knew no tricks, and were not absolutely—like her own father—necessary to the whole management of the town.

Sometimes, when her friends visited her, Duerden joined them to conduct their games. He could not resist, even among children, doing the work for which the Lord had really fitted him. And then the little girls went home and upbraided their own fathers, who could only sit in arm-chairs reading newspapers, who couldn't do tricks, who were so unamusing and without inspiration. "And Naomi's father," they would report if they could find someone to listen to them, "he built us a hut, and he was the big Kaffir chief, and I was the witch-doctor, and I threw the bones, and I smelt out the snake that lived in the well and didn't let the rain come because it wanted the well to be dry. And Naomi's father . . ."

The ugly, bald fathers who simply went to work and then came back to sit in their arm-chairs and read newspapers said: "Yes, yes. Major Duerden certainly is a very clever man." And they were sorry for Major Duerden.

4

Nevertheless, when it came to such things as the Vigilance Association, they recognised his right to command them. He was, after all, a soldier, and he always knew unquestioningly what he wanted, and he had a great and purposeful activity. He was qualified for this kind of leadership.

So he let out the anger he had against Hermia, against Saul, against Diethelm, against Destiny, in his fierce denunciations of the Levites. He warned the people of Gibeon that they were but the nucleus of a great black organization that meant to destroy white South Africa, and that, at any moment now, the Levites might give the signal, fall on Gibeon, and be joined by hordes of Kaffirs awaiting only the word. "Religion? Bunkum!" he said. He drilled his men, called for recruits from neighbouring towns, sent patrols over the countryside, addressed meetings of protest, petitioned the Government.

Captain Krige and his police rode up to the boundaries of the camp. As usual on such occasions, Aaron, on his horse, in his scarlet robes, followed by a regiment of white-smocked Levites, came to meet him.

Captain Krige pointed out that the time limit granted the Levites by the Government had now expired and that, if they did not leave at once, every male native over sixteen years of age in the camp would be arrested for failing to register at the Pass Office.

"We shall resist arrest," said Aaron. He regarded pointedly the small force of police, and waved to the troop behind him.

Captain Krige pushed forward angrily, and there

was a corresponding movement among the white smocks.

His sergeant begged him to be careful. "They're hungry and they're religious mad," he whispered urgently. "They'll kill us."

There was nothing more likely, as Krige knew. He controlled himself.

"I have given you your warning," he said. "If you're not gone, the lot of you, by the end of this month, military measures will be taken against you."

The policemen departed with what dignity they could. In Gibeon they had to suffer the jeers of the Vigilants.

But there were followers of Aaron whom the threat of a military enforcement had terrified. Nor was their faith in Jehovah as great as the hunger in their bellies.

They came to Aaron protesting that the food was all but gone, that the bodies of the children were swollen with the berries and the roots they ate, and their legs were like sticks. "The breasts of the mothers hang empty," they said, "and the little ones are dying. There will be many of us under the ground before the Lord comes."

Aaron confronted them in his scarlet robes. His black face was not as shiny as it once had been, but his bold, protruding eyes with their yellow eyeballs flamed. And the great nostrils of his broad, aquiline nose were winged, and his high, dark-lipped mouth opened over his strong, white teeth, and his throaty voice was hoarse.

"Am I your prophet?" he demanded.

Everything about him seemed to swell out.

He waited.

They made an acquiescent noise.

"Have I God's word?"

They could not deny it.

"Do you believe in God?"

They no longer knew what they believed.

"Go," he said to them, "go, if you wish. And when Jehovah comes down in his big fire, and appears at the door of his tabernacle, and commands the sacks of mealies to stand high in the huts, and the fat cattle to push against one another to the walls of the kraals, and sorrow to be washed from your hearts as winter dust in the first summer rains, and laughter to be in every man's throat . . . And when you who do not believe are going, with your empty bellies, from door to door of the white people's houses, crying 'Work, Baas. Food, Baas,' "—he imitated the weak, pleading, hungry voices—"then do not say to yourselves: 'Aaron never warned us. We knew not.' They that have no belief in me, or my prophecy, or my God, let them go."

They slunk away at that, and had faith for a few days more. But then one began to steal away from the camp, and another. The white man's bread might be bitter, but they had seen it. The Lord's beneficence they had not so clearly experienced.

Aaron posted sentries round the camp. If he could not keep his followers by spiritual force, he would keep them by physical force. The mothers stuffed their empty breasts into whimpering mouths. "There, drink, mampara," they cried angrily.

5

Mr. Kneale, the magistrate of Gibeon, communicated with the Government, and there came emissaries of the Government to parley with Aaron. Let the Levites obey merely the customary laws of the land, they said, the laws that had been made for Kaffirs, and it would be arranged that they should be legally established on the Heights.

Aaron considered his Heights. The trees had been chopped down for firewood. The huts were all but empty of grain. The kraals held hardly any more cattle. Of his two thousand five hundred followers there were still two thousand three hundred left. If Jehovah did not come down to them, what use was the amiability of the Government? It would not cover the land anew with timber, replenish the huts and the kraals, bring back flesh to wasted limbs. And Jehovah might justly say: "You have chosen the Government before me," and might turn his back on them.

Was it worth while, for the sake of the little immediate benefit from the Government, to risk the promised bounty of the Lord?

Aaron stood as he always stood in his moments of exaltation—with his black head up, his black eyes burning, his nostrils winged.

"I am Aaron," he said, "the priest of the Levites and the prophet of the Lord. He has promised to gather his people together and he has commanded the Levites to await his coming here."

"Yes," muttered one of the Government's spokesman, "but, for all that, if we command otherwise, you won't wait here."

He could not tell if Aaron heard them. He dared not press the point. They had been warned to be tactful with the dark fanatics.

"We respect the Government," went on Aaron. "We wish to injure no one. We are anxious to obey the law of the land."

"Then—" began one of the white men.

Aaron continued speaking steadily and unheedingly, staring before him as if he were seeing a vision:

"But Jehovah's law is above the law of the land, and it is Jehovah's law we must obey first. . . . For I have heard his voice, and the time of his coming is close at hand, and then surely will his wrath fall on the unbelievers, and the reward of the believers will be great."

"Now, Aaron," said an impatient white man in a loud voice, "cut out this prophesying, and listen to me, will you?"

Aaron made no sign of knowing that he had been addressed.

"Do you hear me?" demanded the white man.

"I hear you," admitted Aaron, but continued to look before him.

"Are you going quietly, or will you wait till you are driven out with guns?"

Aaron turned slowly towards the speaker.

"I am the servant of God. If the Government and God are on different sides I must follow God against the Government."

The emissaries duly made their report to the Government.

Aaron instructed his followers to arm. They were to prepare to fight for God.

"They cannot drive us out," he told them. "They cannot burn down our huts or kill us with their bullets. As we fight for God, so will he fight for us."

The Vigilants of Gibeon communicated to the Government the fact that the Levites were arming. "If the Government will not protect us, we must protect ourselves," said Arnold Duerden.

CHAPTER XX

I

In the exciting days that followed Duerden sometimes forgot his wife, and he certainly did not trouble himself very greatly about the law-suit that was pending between him and Dr. Diethelm.

It had, in any case, never meant as much to him as to Dr. Diethelm. The case was Dr. Diethelm's whole life. Whatever excitements the other people in Gibeon might know, he knew but one: his case against Duerden.

He was at Bramson's office every day, and several times in every day.

Lying awake at night, a point would occur to him, and it would stab him until he could barely suffer the pain of waiting till nine o'clock in the morning, when Bramson would be at his office. Then he would hasten down to Bramson's office and put the point to Bramson.

Bramson would look at him—at the fiercely questing eyes beneath the overhanging brows from which a few long white hairs sprang out; at the upstanding white hair on his head; at his unshaven cheeks and the unbrushed clothes hanging loose on his reduced body—he would look at him and he would say: "Yes, that is a good point. We must make a note of it." Or, "Yes, that is a good point. Still, I don't know—they might reply to it in this way. . . . Perhaps we had better not give them the opening."

He knew it was a simple and straightforward case, but he always politely considered his clients' suggestions.

Dr. Diethelm would urge his idea on him with passion, and, if Bramson did not definitely agree to accept it, he would leave the office in anger, only to come back an hour or so later with renewed reasons why that point was, of all points, the most essential to the case.

So then Bramson found it a good plan merely to agree with Dr. Diethelm. "Yes, doctor, you are quite right."

But even this did not save him from Dr. Diethelm's continual visits. And although, it is true, no visit went unrecorded, still nothing, Bramson sometimes felt, could adequately repay him for the worry and the nuisance Dr. Diethelm had become to him.

If, by some chance, Dr. Diethelm hadn't a new point to make, or a sudden memory to recall, he simply went to Bramson's office to unburden himself of the load of venom which, as time went by, he generated in ever-increasing quantities. He had ceased—at least, as far as Bramson was concerned—to be a tight-locked man. He came to Bramson and talked and talked to him in his harsh, resonant voice until Bramson felt quite maddened.

There were times now when Bramson could not maintain his tactfully acquiescent manner. His fingers would drum on his desk. "Yes, yes, doctor, I know all that. What's the use of going over it and over it? I'm doing my best. I'm in constant touch with my Pretoria correspondent. We have the advice of one of the best counsels in the country. I can't go on with the thing if you keep worrying me like this."

Dr. Diethelm would listen to him with the strained expression that was due to his increasing deafness, he would search him with his wild, pathetic, questing eyes. And sometimes he would shout at him furiously and rush out of the office, only to come back later, frightened, to apologise, because he felt that he had no one left but Bramson. Or, again, having that thought clear in his mind at the time, he would say quickly and humbly: "Yes, I know, Bramson. I know I can trust you." But once or twice he had actually begun to cry. The tears were always ready in him now. Even if he did not break down, Bramson often saw his eyes filling as he sat leaning forward over his desk or as he walked restlessly about the office.

When Dr. Diethelm was not trusting to the law to revenge him against Duerden, he was meditating private schemes of vengeance. And not only against Duerden, but against the world in general. He spent many sleepless nights—he frequently lay awake throughout the night—thinking of how he could bring home to the world the injustice it had done him.

One of the things he used to do during these nights was to compose letters to various people, detailing to them the story of his life and his grievances. "Dear Sir," he always began in his mind, "Dear Sir." He never thought just what he would say. He always began his imaginary letters over and over again with "Dear Sir."

People who saw him going down the street towards Bramson's office asked one another if there was not something very queer about Dr. Diethelm these days. "Duerden might have hurt his brain," they said.

2

Philemon (that was his pass-name), the Kaffir Dr. Diethelm had had for the last eight years, was still with him, and now, because Dr. Diethelm no longer went to the Phœnix Hotel for his meals, he cooked for him, too. He was not a good cook—almost daily he gave his master mealie-meal porridge for breakfast, eggs for lunch, and bean-soup and stew for dinner. But as Dr. Diethelm, when he did eat, hardly knew what he was putting in his mouth, Philemon's uninspired cooking was not the greatest of calamities. At least, the food was not wasted. Philemon never ate eggs, but he could not live without mealie-meal, and he loved bean-soup and stew above all things.

If the house was imperfectly cleaned, that, too, Dr. Diethelm did not notice; nor did he care if the shoes he hurriedly put on to run down to Bramson had seen no polish for days. Most of the time, indeed, he went about at home with his bare feet in a pair of old leather slippers which flapped as he walked because the backs were trodden down, and he wore nothing else except a shirt and a pair of trousers. The only person he spoke to, beside Bramson, was Philemon. He walked past the people in the street without noticing them, and he did not even say good morning to Bramson's young clerk or otherwise address him, unless Bramson happened to be out, and he wanted to know when he would be back.

Philemon told him that there was trouble coming on the Heights, that the Levites were arming and the Vigilants drilling, but he took no interest in Philemon's stories, they never really got to his consciousness.

He thought only, and all day long, about Duerden and his case.

3

Sometimes he thought that he could not possibly lose his case. But, at other times, injustice seeming to be his portion in the world, he saw no hope of winning it.

Then he would visualise Duerden returning to Gibeon, victorious, with his red, well-shaven face up and triumphant, and he would fling his arms out wide, his hands clenched, and beat them against the emptiness. He would kill Duerden, he would kill himself, if Duerden got the better of him, he thought.

As the day of the hearing of the case approached he gave Bramson no peace. Now he began to worry that the judges might be friends of Duerden's, that his own counsel might be a friend of Duerden's. Why not? Duerden had once practised at the Johannesburg Bar, and how far was Johannesburg from Pretoria?—an hour's journey. They all knew one another, the members of the Transvaal Bar, and the judges were their old comrades.

"No, that's nonsense," Bramson told him. "Get that out of your head. You'll have a fair trial."

"Did I have a fair trial here?" cried Dr. Diethelm.

"You have to remember the provocation. You insulted Mrs. Duerden," Bramson answered for the twentieth time. "And you didn't improve matters in court."

"You're against me yourself," said Dr. Diethelm finally.

There was excitement in Gibeon in these days. For

seven months the Levites had been lying behind the town, and now they were arming. At any moment, something, the people told one another, might happen. The anxiety affected everyone.

Bramson crashed his fist down on the desk.

"Then go to hell with your case," he said. "I'm done with it."

Dr. Diethelm stared at him with frightened eyes, flung out a helpless hand, bowed his head on the desk, and broke into terrible sobs.

"Oh, for God's sake, for God's sake!" muttered the distracted attorney.

Another client knocked at the door. Bramson opened it. The client, through the half-opened door, gazed at the sprawling, sobbing figure. Bramson shrugged his shoulders, lifted his eyebrows, and sent the client away.

A half-hour passed and Dr. Diethelm was still there, quiet now, but immovable, exhausted.

It was one o'clock. In desperation Bramson said:

"Look here, I'm going home to lunch now. You'd better come with me."

Barely knowing what he was doing Dr. Diethelm followed him to the car.

At his house Bramson took him into the bathroom to wash himself, and then brought him into the dining-room. His young almond-eyed wife tried, with easy talk, to lighten the occasion.

The Bramsons ate well. She persuaded him to try this and that, and Dr. Diethelm, hungry, although he did not realise it, half-starved by Philemon's cooking, went on eating. He sat, in silence, while Mrs. Bramson chatted away, filling himself, like an unknowing

baby, with food. He took the drinks Bramson offered him.

After lunch Bramson put him into his motor-car again and brought him home. The native, Philemon, opened the door, and Bramson told him his master was not very well, and he must look after him. Then he returned to his office.

CHAPTER XXI

I

Dr. Diethelm lay down on his bed. He was quiet now. But he had reached the end. He felt that he had no friend in the world, and that, even if he paid Bramson, he also disgusted him. He saw himself, not only as rejected, but as justly rejected.

He felt very calm. He reviewed his life during the past ten years. It seemed to him a nightmare struggling. He was pursued and he could not move. He cried aloud, he put every compulsion on himself, and he could not go forward an inch.

Why did he bear it? What purpose had he in living? He cared for no one. He was necessary to no one. Until lately he had still found some interest in his work. But no sooner did a new man like Saul Nathan come to town than his patients were prepared to desert him. Some of them had even gone to Tetyana—a real humiliation for a white man.

Humiliation! Was there a humiliation he had not lately known? But the worst affront of all was that the law should have held a fine of twenty-five pounds sufficient punishment for a deed that had shamed him in the public eye and damaged him for life. Now he was about to put himself in the hands of the law again. And what could it not do to him? What safeguard had a man against the machinery of the law? It went its terrible, exact way. Only too clearly,

he saw now, he would get nothing out of the business. He would win his claim. Duerden would win his counter-claim. He would remain with his injuries, and Duerden would strut about Gibeon, a vindicated hero.

At the thought that, in the years to come, he must go on meeting Duerden, he sat up suddenly in bed, and his heart began beating as in those nightmares of a desperate immobility with which he had just compared his life.

But why immobility? Could he not leave Gibeon?

For the first time in weeks he remembered his daughters. Should he go to his daughters? The very idea made him hate them. Should he fare forth to make a home for himself in a strange town? He realised, as he had not done in his passion of the last months, his great tiredness.

He was an old man.

He sat on his bed, looking with dry, red, unseeing eyes through his dirty window. Presently he got down and pulled an old leather trunk from beneath his bed. It was thick with dust, with little woolly balls of dust. Philemon had probably not looked under the bed since last he had told him to do so—before his trouble with Duerden began.

He opened the trunk and took the picture of his son from it. He had imagined it would make him feel —something, he did not know what, a biting, beautiful emotion. It made him feel nothing. He looked at the picture with his dry, red eyes—emptiness, emptiness. He had not even the memory of his son left.

He put the piece of pasteboard back, closed the trunk, and pushed it under the bed again.

Then he stood up, stood straight and very still.

Then he walked slowly out of his bedroom and into his consulting-room, and his eyes ranged the shelves. He could not see what he wanted there. But he went on looking as if his eyes had the power of creation.

Suddenly he turned round, walked quickly out of his consulting-room back into his bedroom, opened the cupboard of his washstand, took a bottle of lysol from it, filled his grey-looking tumbler with the poisonous disinfectant, and, without pausing, drank it to the end.

Fire flew over his lips, round his mouth, over his tongue, past his throat. It burnt its passage down into his body. A flash—as if he had been struck internally by lightning—and he knew nothing.

2

Two hours later Philemon, remembering that the baas who had brought his master home in the car had told him his master was not well and he must look after him, decided to take Dr. Diethelm some tea. He went to the bedroom, knocked softly at the door, and called out: "Master. Does master want tea, please?"

There was no reply, and he thought Dr. Diethelm must be asleep. But then the unaccountably strong smell coming from the room made him curious, and he could not resist opening the door to investigate it.

His first impulse, when he saw Dr. Diethelm lying still on the floor, was to shut the door quickly and run away. Indeed, he went to the kitchen and stood there pondering for a moment before returning to the bedroom. What would the white people expect a

Kaffir to do now? Move his master? Not move him? He stared at the still form, afraid to touch it. He noticed that Dr. Diethelm had been vomiting. In the dimness underneath the washstand lay the heavy, stained tumbler, unbroken by its fall. Philemon bent down, picked it up, and, carrying it with him, ran at top speed through the streets to the first white man he could think of: the baas who had brought his master home, Baas Bramson.

He showed Bramson the glass.

"Yes?" said Bramson. "What is it?" And before the impatient words were out of his mouth, before the native had begun to stumble through his words: "My master. He drink this. My master. I think he dead"—at once Bramson knew what had happened.

He took the glass from Philemon. Lysol.

His car was outside his office. He told Philemon to come with him, and drove to Old Nathan's store.

Old Nathan was sitting on a wooden bench on the stoep.

"Is your son in?" shouted Bramson, as he stopped the car and sprang from it.

"Yes. What has happened?" asked Old Nathan.

Bramson did not stop to reply to him. He rushed through the shop and into the living-room behind it. Saul was lying on the couch, reading.

Bramson held out the glass. "Diethelm's taken lysol," he said.

"Lysol?" said Saul, getting up quickly. "Don't be ridiculous, man. No doctor would take lysol."

"I tell you he has. His Kaffir's in my car outside."

Saul stuffed a few things into his bag. Old Nathan, who had followed Bramson into the house, asked if he

could be of any use. Both young men told him no, and as Old Nathan saw how quickly they ran out, and how eagerly they spoke, he had again his old thought that tragedy was vivifying. Often people suffered without knowing it. But sometimes, when they were very conscious of it, they were not suffering as much as they imagined.

On the way to Dr. Diethelm's, Saul questioned Philemon. But Philemon could tell him nothing except that Baas Bramson had instructed him to look after his master, and he had gone to take him tea, and had smelt this strong smell, and had found his master lying on the floor with the glass beside him. He was now relieved of fear. He saw that no one blamed him for anything. Apparently what he had done had been very satisfactory. He told his story with an excited joyousness. He was glad this interesting thing had happened.

"How is it you came to tell the boy to look after Diethelm?" Saul asked Bramson.

"Well, you know I see him every day—sometimes three or four times a day—concerning the case."

He paused. He remembered that Saul was involved in the case, and felt uncomfortable.

"I'm often sorry enough," he added, "I took on the confounded affair. That old man can—could—" He stopped for a moment, undecided. Present or past, who could say? He continued in the present: "—can drive a person mad," he said. "I sometimes think he's mad himself. I'll tell you what happened today. He came in, as usual, to worry me, just to worry me. It's his only business, these days, worrying me. Well, this time he wanted to know whether

the judges and his own advocate wouldn't be against him because they might know Duerden from his old Bar days. I told him that was nonsense. So he shouted out he hadn't had a fair trial here, and I was also against him. I lost my temper over that."

"What did you say to him?"

"I told him to go to hell with his case. I said I was sick of it. He was terribly upset. He cried."

Saul nodded.

They drove on silently for a second or two.

"I've seen him cry before," said Bramson. "But not like today. It upset me as well. I didn't know what to do. I couldn't get on with my work. He sat there in my office absolutely done in. I decided to take him home to lunch."

"Did he come willingly?"

"Oh, he just came. You know how a man does things when he hardly knows what's going on. He ate that way too."

"He ate, did he?"

"My wife was surprised. She put food on his plate, and he wolfed it down like a starved animal. I gave him a couple of brandies and soda and he swallowed them as if they were water. He simply didn't know what he was doing."

"I suppose he was starved," commented Saul.

"Yes, perhaps. He's only got"—he raised his eyebrows to indicate Philemon—"that as housekeeper. . . . Well, the end of it was I took him home and asked the native to keep an eye on him because he wasn't well."

"I see," said Saul.

They drew up before Dr. Diethelm's house and ran into the bedroom. The smell of lysol was all-pervading.

Saul dropped down beside Diethelm, raised his head after a moment, and said to Bramson: "He's not dead. Good God, lysol! A medical man! Of all insane things! We'll take him to the hospital. Help me carry him to the car, will you? We'll have the stuff pumped out of him."

He made a gesture with his head. "You see he's been vomiting. He took the lysol, and plenty of it, after having that heavy lunch and those drinks with you, and it didn't stay down. Perhaps the lunch has really saved him. He's not heavy, is he? for a man of his build. Look how he's burnt."

They put him in the car, and drove to the Gibeon Hospital.

3

Dr. Diethelm came back to consciousness in a bed in the hospital, and heard the voice of a nurse he knew. He thought that, after all, there was survival after death, and then he realised that he was alive. He opened his eyes, and saw Saul Nathan and the nurse. He felt embarrassed, humiliated, ridiculous and resentful.

Saul spoke to him, smiling slightly.

"You're all right," he said. "You've had a close shave, but we found you in time. Don't try to speak. I'm going now. I'll be back shortly."

He was afraid his presence might affect Dr. Diethelm adversely, and he hurried out.

Diethelm moved his eyes heavily towards the nurse. She patted his pillow comfortingly. "You're a lucky man, doctor. You've practically come back from the other world."

He opened his mouth, but did not speak. "Lucky!" he thought. "Lucky!"

And he thought again how people who did not care whether he was dead or not insisted on bringing him back to a life he did not want, but how God himself could not make whole again his boy who had been shattered into fragments. No more than humans could he go back on his own laws.

And that brought him to the moment when he had opened his dusty trunk, and taken from it the photograph of his son, and stared at it without being able to feel. That had definitely ended it. If he could not even remember his son, what had he to live for?

He shut his eyes and tried to recall the picture now. He kept them shut a long time, and the nurse supposed he had fallen asleep. She began to move away gently. But then he opened his eyes, and made the faintest motion to her with his weak hand. She bent towards him, and he whispered:

"There is a photograph of my son in a box under my bed. I wish to see it." After a moment he added, queerly to himself: "Please."

"Of course, doctor," the nurse said, and she felt somehow a sense of triumph. "Of course. We'll send for it at once."

There came a strange idea to Dr. Diethelm that this time, if he saw his son's picture, he would be able to feel again. Through his weakness, through his pain, through his shame, there came the thought to him that if he could feel the loss of his son he would know he was once more part of the world of men.

CHAPTER XXII

I

That a man should attempt suicide was something which appalled Duerden as no less direct manifestation of misery could have done.

Now he began to realise for the first time something of Dr. Diethelm's suffering. Now his conscience spoke to him. Now he remembered that, after all, it was he who had begun the trouble outside the Phœnix Hotel, and he wished he had not done so, and he was ashamed that he had used the power of his body against the old man.

He knew, too, in a dim kind of way, that it was not only Dr. Diethelm's slander of his wife which had infurited him—he had been prepared to be infuriated, there was a sort of fury in him, before ever Dr. Diethelm had mentioned his wife.

But, as he blamed himself so, he began, at the same time, to defend himself. No one, he thought, understood him. He had never been understood, never. Not his wife, not the people in Gibeon, not his friends in Johannesburg, not any soul of his childhood's days had penetrated to the something in him which was hidden under the insensitive, defiant self he presented to the world. Nobody knew of the ideals he had, of the wistful feelings that sometimes moved him, of his love of nature and many beautiful things, of the tendernesses in him, of his romantic cravings. There were times

when he even cared for music and wanted to read poetry. But how could he make himself ridiculous about such things when everyone knew Hermia sang and wrote to make money for the household he could not adequately maintain? And then Hermia so definitely assumed that he had no taste, and she did not speak to him as she spoke to other men, and now she had left him because—was it true, or was it not true that she and Saul—? He felt full of bewilderments.

While he was drilling his Vigilants he thought of Hermia and Saul and Dr. Diethelm; he thought, for the first time in days, about the case.

Was there not some way, he wondered, in which the case could be avoided—not only for his own sake, but, genuinely, for the old man's too? When he visualised him lying there in the hospital, he hated the idea of coming up against him once more in enmity. But he could do anything in the world now, it would not give Dr. Diethelm back his full hearing. There was no reparation he might make for that. And Dr. Diethelm, as soon as he was well enough, would insist, as before, on going on with the case. And what option would he have then, if he did not wish to be ruined, but to counterclaim?

He wrote a note and took it to the hospital and asked the sister to give it to Dr. Diethelm as soon as she thought it possible to give it to him. He spoke in the note of his regret that there had been trouble between them, and that he wished it need not continue. He asked Dr. Diethelm to accept his sincere hope for his speedy recovery.

He did, it is true, think once or twice that if Dr. Diethelm had died when he had wanted to all this

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miserable law-business would have ended also. But his thought held no viciousness in it. It was merely a rather wistful recognition of a fact.

2

He had not heard from Hermia since she had left him. The fact that she had gone away, and that Saul had remained in Gibeon, was one of the causes of his bewilderment. At the same time, how was he to know the truth? What was he to do about it all?

But he was right when he thought of himself as one misunderstood. If only people had taken the trouble to look at more than his strong, arrogant body and his flung-back red-brown head, they would have seen in Arnold Duerden a man who had lost his sense of spiritual direction.

Yet he had full confidence in one thing: the rightness of his position as leader of the Vigilants.

There was, indeed, a feeling of insecurity about all Gibeon. Dadabhai's shop had been broken into twice, fowls were disappearing from fowl-runs, sheep and cattle from kraals. In nearly every case the thieves had been caught by members of the Vigilance Association, and although the captives always denied it, no one doubted that most of them were Levites.

Now, lately, little strange children had taken to hanging about outside shops and the back-doors of houses, saying: "Bread, please, missis. Bread, please." And their bellies were big and tight and their navels protruded and their arms and legs were fleshless and their faces were greyish-black and hollow.

And Kaffir girls who did not come from the locations

and kraals outside Gibeon were going from door to door looking for work. And gaunt old women were wandering about the streets of Gibeon, purposeless and without expectation, yet drawn thither by the mere knowledge that in Gibeon there was food. But the men did not come because, having no passes, they dared not. And it was no secret that the Levites were preparing to fight.

Now the Government, having so long refrained from using violence, instructed the magistrate of Gibeon to inform Aaron that if he and his Levites were not gone from the Heights in three days—had not by then availed themselves of the Government's offer to take them home by train—an armed force would be sent against them.

Aaron answered simply in one sentence: "We await God's command."

3

This time a force of Mounted Police was sent to Gibeon, and it had aeroplanes and a machine-gun and artillery, and the Vigilants were enrolled as special constables.

Over the Heights of Gibeon, as a day and another day passed, the aeroplanes flew, dropping pamphlets printed in English and Afrikaans and Zulu and Sesuto, warning the Levites that if they did not signalise their intention to go peaceably, they would be attacked the next morning at dawn.

Aaron called together his elders. "Is it God or the Government?" he asked them.

"It is God," they answered heavily.

On the last night Tetyana came over to the camp.

"Aaron," he pleaded, "you will have the lives of your poor people on your head. You will all be wiped out. What can you do against the white people's weapons?"

"We can oppose them with the white people's God. Did they not give him to us? Have they not told us he is all-powerful?"

"Yes. For his own purposes. But how do you know it is his purpose that you should disobey the Government?"

"I have read his Word. I have heard his voice. He has commanded us to remain here."

"It is a madman's delusion."

Aaron fixed him with his black, protruding, fervent eyes.

"Do you say I am mad? Or that it is madness to believe in God?"

"Both," thought Tetyana bitterly. But he did not answer him aloud. He merely pointed out that the Bible had promised enough food in the sixth year to provide for the seventh year—the Sabbath year, but yet hunger was in the camp, and the Levites were begging in Gibeon. "What do you say to that?" he asked.

"I say it is our own fault," said Aaron. "We had enough, but we were not careful with the food. We did not live like people of the spirit in a Sabbath year. We feasted like animals."

Tetyana walked up and down the small room exhorting, promising, threatening.

The minutes passed.

"Dr. Tetyana," said Aaron then with a formal dignity which enraged the doctor, "I have now heard you.

My answer is the same to you as it is to the Government." He paused, and added presently: "But there is a woman in great pain in the camp. Help her. That is your work, Dr. Tetyana."

Tetyana looked at Aaron, overflowing with anger. "That is your work!" Yes. But not giving advice, apparently. It was on his tongue to refuse to go to the woman. But then he remembered that she was not responsible for Aaron's words, and he thought, too: "Poor fool! Tomorrow he will hear arguments of a different kind."

"Where is this woman?" he demanded shortly. "Take me to her."

They walked together through the camp. It was not dark in the camp tonight. Outside every reed-and-mud hut a fire was burning, and on the fire there stood a Kaffir pot, and in the Kaffir pot was good cooking. The night air was thick with the smell of meat. For Aaron had said: "Let the last sheep and the last ox be taken from the kraal this day and slaughtered. Let the last mealie be shaken from the bag. Eat, my people. Fill yourselves. Do not trouble for tomorrow. Tomorrow you shall see the coming of the Lord."

The starving folk had fallen on the few bony animals that Aaron had kept from them, they had shaken the remaining mealies and mealie-meal from their bags. Whatever happened when the dawn came, tonight they would eat. Eat!

Round the fires they crouched, and the fires lit up the high cheek-bones over the black hollows dug by hunger, and the excited, troubled eyes. No one was going to sleep tonight, and, while the women cooked,

the men fingered their weapons: a gun or a revolver here and there, but generally only a knife or a heavy stick or an iron bar. The knob-kerries and assegais of which Old Nathan had spoken were not represented. They were nothing but a metaphor. Kaffirs on the way to civilisation would not use them.

There was the noise of great talking in the camp, and some of the Levites were praying or singing hymns: the men in their deep, booming voices, the women in their strident wail, but always rhythmically, and in spontaneous, lovely harmonies. And certainly the hymns did not sound as if any white creature had composed them; they did not, really, sound like hymns at all. . . . The little children were running about, or scrambling over one another, happy because of the food, not concerned with the coming of the morrow, or the coming of the soldiers, or the coming of the Lord.

The two men approached a hut from which rose the sound of an agonised wailing.

"Here is the place," said Aaron. "I will leave you now."

A man came out, stooping, from the hut, sheltering a candle.

"It is the doctor!" he exclaimed. "Oh, doctor, we did not know you would come. We could not send for you on this night. Doctor, my wife is very sick."

He spoke in Afrikaans, for he was a Free State native, and Tetyana answered him in the same language.

"Aaron brought me," he said. "What is the matter with your wife?"

"It is the stomach, my doctor. The pain in the stomach is terrible. If I put my finger on her, she

screams. If I cover her with my kaross, she screams. She lies with her knees high. And first she was shivering with the cold. But now she is burning with the heat. She has not eaten for days—you know, doctor, today is the first day we have big food—but she vomits. All the people are eating tonight, but my wife. And my own heart does not want food either. Come in, doctor."

They bent their bodies and lowered their heads to pass through the entrance of the hut, which was so low that only a child or a dog could go in naturally.

"Have you got another candle?" Tetyana asked the husband.

"I will borrow one," the man said, handing the doctor the candle he held.

"Borrow!" thought Tetyana. "A good word! And at dawn the guns will be on you!"

The woman was lying on some skins on the earth with her knees drawn up as her husband had described. Her breathing was quick and shallow, and came from her chest only. Her face was drawn. She ceased her moaning as Dr. Tetyana approached her, and looked at him with slow-moving, anxious eyes, but, as he bent down to touch her, she involuntarily screamed.

Her husband came back with another candle, and he held the two candles while Tetyana examined her.

Presently Tetyana drew himself straight, and made a gesture with his head towards the night outside, and the man steadied one candle in a tin that stood on a box, and took the other with him as they crawled out of the hut together.

"Is it a bad thing, my doctor?" he pleaded. "Will she die?"

"Yes. It is a bad thing," Tetyana told him. "But there is a chance to save her."

He paused.

"What is the chance?"

"I must cut the evil out," said Dr. Tetyana, speaking in words the man could understand.

"Cut!" cried the man. "As they do in the hospitals! No, doctor, no, no. You understand us Kaffirs. You are our blood. If it is the will of the Lord that she shall die, let her die whole. Don't cut her, doctor. Don't cut her!"

He had raised his voice, and the listening quiet within was broken again by screaming.

"There is no other way," said Tetyana. "And it must be done at once."

"At once! Doctor!"

"Tonight."

"Tonight! No, no, doctor!"

"As soon as I can get another doctor to help me. I can't do it alone. But first come with me to quieten your wife."

He went into the hut again.

"We are not going to hurt you," he said to the woman.

"You said—cut—" she gasped.

"No. You are making a mistake. I am only going to get something to stop the pain. But you must lie still while I am away."

"He said cut," she appealed to her husband.

The man looked helplessly at the doctor.

Dr. Tetyana smiled. "Your husband won't let me."

He left the hut, and began to walk in the direction of his motor-car.

The man came after him. "Doctor, is it so, or is it not so? Is it cut?"

"Yes, it is so," said Dr. Tetyana sternly, "but you mustn't tell your wife. Now go back to her, and behave like a man."

4

He drove through the camp, past the black sentries who knew his car, past the white sentries who knew him also, and straight to Saul Nathan. The woman had peritonitis, and he would require Saul to give the anæsthetic while he operated.

It was ten o'clock, and Saul had already gone to bed. He awoke at Tetyana's peremptory knock, and opened the door.

"Oh, you, Tetyana! Come in."

Old Nathan, too, had got up, and the three men—the old Jew and the young Jew and the Kaffir—were in the room together.

"Well, what is it now?" Saul asked Tetyana.

"Will you come up to the Heights with me to give an anæsthetic?"

"To the Heights!" exclaimed Old Nathan. "You can't go to the Heights tonight, Saul."

"It's an urgent case," said Tetyana.

"But the Levites will be attacked at daybreak!"

"He'll be home hours before," said Tetyana.

"How can a white man go among them tonight?"

"He'll go safely. I'll see to that."

"Don't go, Saul," pleaded Old Nathan.

Saul put his hand on his father's shoulder.

"It must be done, I suppose?" he asked Tetyana.

"Yes," said Tetyana with conviction. "And at once, if the woman's life is to be saved. Have you a couple of oil-lamps in the shop, Mr. Nathan? We will need them."

Old Nathan stood looking from his son to Tetyana. What did they, Jews, have to do with this Kaffir? He hated Tetyana for coming to make demands on his son.

"Won't you get the lamps, father?" said Saul.

Old Nathan turned slowly towards the shop. He came back with the lamps, and followed Saul about as he dressed and collected what he required. Then he went with him into the street that was lit only by the lamps of Tetyana's motor-car.

"Take care of yourself, my son," he said.

"Don't worry, father," said Saul, as he stepped into the car.

"I'll wait for you."

"We won't be long."

Tetyana started the car.

"I have to go to my surgery," he told Saul.

Saul made no comment. But he turned to the Kaffir presently. "Well, this is something like life. Four days ago Diethelm, and now the Heights."

5

"How is Diethelm?" Tetyana asked after they had spoken about his patient. They were on the way to the Heights now.

"He's pulled through all right," said Saul. "That man still has the remains of a great constitution. What saved him, of course, was a heavy meal he had just

before he took the stuff. It didn't stay down. He's a little burnt, nothing else. But you know about that, I suppose."

"I've heard something. Rumours. You forget I'm not in touch with the hospital any more, or—Europeans, except some poor whites. But Diethelm, is he satisfied to be in the world again?"

"An extraordinary thing has happened to Diethelm," said Saul. "It is as if—" he paused a moment; sitting there in the night, tired after a hard day's work, with the car making a hypnotic noise, he forgot almost that he was speaking to the Kaffir doctor, and his words came out musingly, "—as if he had flung himself into hell and been thrown out to try life again. He seems to have lost his bitterness. He showed me a photograph of his son this morning, and told me he would have been my age if he had lived. He asked me if he shouldn't go to Germany to see a specialist about his ears. He said he wanted to see Germany again, particularly Heidelberg, where he was a student forty years ago."

Saul had, by this time, quite lost the sense that he had Tetyana beside him. He continued remembering now in silence. And so they drove along a while. And then Tetyana said with hesitation—for he was not used, in South Africa, to the intimacy of white men, and he was exhilarated and yet troubled by Saul's unexpected freedom with him—he said:

"And Major Duerden? Did Diethelm mention him?"

"Major Duerden? Duerden?" repeated Saul, drawn away from his thoughts, and lost for a moment. "Oh, yes, he spoke about him. He said he had had a letter

from Duerden. He said he was prepared to settle the case. . . . Because, as his attorney had told him often enough, there was no use going on. He would win his claim, and Duerden would win his counter-claim, and he would get neither money nor revenge out of it. No, there won't be any case now."

"It is curious Diethelm should have changed like this."

"No, it is not so curious. Such changes happen among people who have attempted to take their lives and been saved. Sometimes, of course, they try again. It depends on the circumstances. But, generally, they seem to have the feeling that they've made their demonstration against Fate, and they find a new sort of contentment with life. . . . But, talking of would-be suicides, tell me, how are those poor fools on the Heights? What are they doing? How are they preparing to meet the dawn?"

"Most of them are eating," said Tetyana.

It seemed a banal reply.

"Eating?" repeated Saul.

"Aaron has told them to finish all the food there is because the Lord will be here tomorrow."

"Does he really believe that?"

"He may want them to pick up a little heart and strength for the fighting. They're starving, you know. And, besides, what's the use of their being careful with food now? Those who are killed won't want it. And the others will be sent home with some rations. This is the end of the Levites."

"Haven't you told Aaron so?"

"I spent nearly two hours arguing with him tonight. I can't say whether he still hopes God will come at the

last moment, or whether he can't face the humiliation of giving in now. But he's immovable."

"And the others? Do they believe, or are they only obeying Aaron?"

"I can't tell you. Some of them were praying as I came through, and some were singing hymns. I think most of them have given up worrying. We black people are fatalists, you know."

Saul looked at his wrist-watch against the dashboard light. "Nearly eleven. How many hours before dawn, Tetyana?"

"About six."

They began speaking again about the sick woman.

"The arrangements won't be as in the best hospitals," said Saul.

"But it's a question of hours," answered Tetyana.

CHAPTER XXIII

I

THE operation was over. It was two o'clock in the morning. Only the children on the Heights had gone to sleep. The men and the women had given up singing. But here and there a few sat in a group talking; and here and there some sat—only waiting.

"You'd better go home, Dr. Nathan," said Tetyana. He had never yet spoken a white man's name without its courtesy title, and he did not now.

"What about the woman?" asked Saul. "She will need looking after."

"I'll stay with her. And then—besides—there will be work for a doctor here in the morning."

Saul Nathan stood looking at the black man in silence. A terrible uneasiness was on him. There would be work for a doctor in the morning, and Tetyana was going to stay; Tetyana said he should return home.

He felt sick in his stomach as he spoke.

"If there's to be work, I can't leave you here alone."

"They're my people."

"They're human beings."

He thought, as he said the words, how many South Africans would consider such a remark mere sentimentality. And, indeed, the feeling he really had at the moment was one of angry hatred for these fools who, pursuing inevitable disaster, must needs involve

in their madness the lives of sane men. What right had they, in the circumstances, to the duty of others?

Duty! How the thought of it always revolted him! How it took the brightness out of things! How it dragged along by chains the beneficence that would have sprung forward by itself! How it weighed down the heart of man with the transmitted obligations of ten thousand years, and set at him from within and set at him from without and bound him the slave of every atom under the sun!

Tetyana stood watching him. He could not tell what Saul was thinking. "They're human beings," Saul had said. Tetyana's next words were a corollary of that statement.

"Then you'll stay too," he commented.

Saul looked at him with a coldness he could not appreciate.

"Yes, I'll stay too," he answered, and stared away from the Kaffir into the darkness that the stars stabbed with their naked points—and remembered that his father was waiting for him.

After a moment he added: "We have nothing to work with."

Tetyana hesitated. "I don't want you to think I had this idea in my mind when I went to fetch you tonight. But it struck me, while I was in my surgery, that the woman wouldn't be my last bit of work here, and I've brought a certain amount of stuff with me."

There was silence between them again.

Then Saul said:

"Any use making a final appeal to Aaron?"

"I don't think so. Try, if you like."

Saul sighed. "No. I've a feeling nothing can be

done. No. Leave it. I wish I weren't so tired. I was up practically all last night too with a case. And today—yesterday, I mean—things never seemed to stop. That's why you found me asleep at ten o'clock. Well, we'd better get busy, I suppose. We'll have to make a dressing-station of the tabernacle. There's no other place."

"Oughtn't we to ask Aaron first?"

"Ask Aaron? To hell with Aaron!" said Saul with an access of vigour. "If we had any guts we'd shoot him for a criminal lunatic and save a few hundred lives. Come to the tabernacle, Tetyana."

"I'll just let the woman's husband know where he can find us," said Tetyana.

2

Outside the tabernacle they came upon Aaron, in his scarlet cloak, addressing a group of men. He held a torch in his hand, and as its flare illumined the two doctors he became silent and stood erect, waiting for them.

Saul spoke. "It has struck Tetyana and me," he said, "that you will need the services of doctors within a few hours."

"We need only God," replied Aaron.

"Nevertheless, if there is to be fighting—"

"God will fight on our side."

"Still, if there are wounded—"

The men, whom Aaron had been admonishing, were murmuring among themselves.

"Let the doctors stay to help us," one cried out aloud.

"Who spoke?" demanded Aaron.

There was a sudden quiet. Aaron himself broke it after a moment. These men had been begging him to give in while there was yet time. He was not going to anger them over a trifle.

"You may stay," he said graciously to Saul. And Saul was on the point of turning his back on the Heights and the condescension of their prophet when there came from the group the deep-toned pleading: "Stay, our doctor."

"We propose," said Saul coldly then, "to use the tabernacle as a dressing-station."

He was prepared for some sort of insane opposition, but Aaron said nothing. He was thinking of the battle at dawn, and he was no longer concerned with the details of the religion he was defending. They might have the tabernacle, for all he cared.

He departed with his reluctant followers to make final arrangements for defending the camp.

3

From behind the Heights on the east there began to spread the glow of the rising sun. Soon the pale sky would deepen to blue. It was to be a hot and cloudless day.

Then little dirty Kaffir children, ungluing their sticky eyes, ran out, naked, into the yellow sand of the camp, crying: "See, see, the machines like big birds in the sky. There they are." Presently they shouted with glee: "We can hear them. They are coming nearer. Listen, how near they are coming. Oh, they are right over us. Never have we seen them so close."

But now a new noise, a noise only a few of the Levites who had been overseas in the Labour Contingent had before experienced. "Pit-pit-pit," said the aeroplanes, "pit-pit-pit-pit"—and just outside the camp the yellow dust flew up, and then it flew up inside the camp, and suddenly, from behind a hillock facing the Heights, there came another greater kind of noise, and, following the noise, men in khaki ran towards the camp. Aaron in his scarlet cloak, so dingy now, followed by his men in dirty white smocks, ran out to meet these men in khaki. They carried their guns and their revolvers and their sticks and bars of iron. They ran out as if beings not themselves were inhabiting their bodies, shooting—they did not know how; and the men with the knives and pieces of wood and iron ran faster than the others, trying to get at some human flesh they might strike.

But continually they fell, to groan or to contort themselves and then lie still, and on the Heights a mud-plastered building that had not lately received its meed of sacrifices was sanctified anew.

To Saul, as he bent over the black, white-robed, red-stained bodies, it seemed like a dream. Could this really be Saul Nathan, who had come so happily to Gibeon to take Dr. Gyde's place? How long had he been in Gibeon? Seven months? Eight months? It seemed he could remember no other existence. And yet the thought of it gave him no emotion at all. It might have been someone else's life he was contemplating.

There was Hermia. If one came to consider it, she had set him upon the path that had brought him here to the Heights. Otherwise, he might have been with

the Vigilants and not with Tetyana. Otherwise, Dr. Diethelm might not now have been in hospital and she herself—wherever she was at the moment. But why think this strange? A force great enough to convulse a world—the most far-reaching idea—could originate in only one head. Nothing had more than a single birth.

Well, she had drawn him, rejected him, drawn him, lost him. Among all this flesh and blood that was so truly and bitterly, under his hands, flesh and blood, she was not flesh and blood to him.

He wondered, in a casual sort of way, if her husband, whose work might, at this very moment, be before him here in the tabernacle, if her husband was thinking of her too. Duerden? He bore him no ill-will in the world. Let him march forward with his red-brown head and his strong, contemptuous body. Duerden? Poor, arrogant fool! He was sorry for him, as he was sorry for Diethelm, whispering, with his burnt lips: "If he had lived, my son would have been your age."

Yet he was not really sorry. He was not really anything at all. He was dreaming, it seemed.

But such a curious dream! What was he, Saul Nathan, doing here among these groaning savages? Why did he again hear, as ten years ago in France, this pit-pitting, this whining and booming? How could it happen that he, of all white men in the world, was involved in this mad, black waiting for the coming of a Lord?

His thoughts faded, as if they had been exhibited on a film and reeled off the stage. Now he could remember only his father, with the shy, dark-blue eyes beneath the too-big forehead, humming as he played

chess, triumphant if he won, bitter if he lost—no sportsman at all. He had hardly played with the old man lately. Now he had just a few months left in Gibeon. He ought to give him a game oftener. It was the only thing—except talking—he loved. And he might let him win too. It was an easy way to make a human being happy.

His father disappeared from the screen. Now he was giving a black woman an anæsthetic by the light of two small oil-lamps and two candles. She lay on dirty blankets within an evil-smelling hut. And her husband had followed him out of the hut and said: "If she gets well, I will call the next child the Lord sends us 'Doctor,' in memory of this night. And if it is girl, I will call her after the doctor's mother. Not after his wife, for a man may have many wives, but after his mother, for a man can have only one mother. It is a bigger thing. . . ." Who, Saul wondered, was looking after the woman at this moment? . . .

His thoughts passed to Aaron, holding a torch outside this very tabernacle, and saying haughtily: "Let them stay. . . ." For Heaven's sake, could nothing have been done to avoid this—this—? His fingers went on working rapidly. "Does anyone know what has become of Aaron?" he asked Tetyana suddenly.

"I haven't heard," replied Tetyana.

The world was bright now outside, but inside the tabernacle, because it had only a few windows high up, it was always dim. The mattresses and the skins on the floor were covered with wounded and dying. Black women, their headdresses awry, who had come to help, went about making sounds of woe—useless as nurses.

"We haven't room for another," said Saul.

"And there isn't a bandage left," said Tetyana.

Saul stood up. "I must get out and smoke a cigarette," he said. "I'm done."

He lit his cigarette outside.

Presently a young native ran up to him. "Doctor," he gasped, "doctor, Aaron is shot."

"Killed?"

"No, doctor."

"Where is he?"

He followed the young native. As he knelt in the yellow sand, beside the scarlet cloak, Aaron lifted the lids from his eyes to a flash, a sound. And he said something in the tongue of his fathers: perhaps that they should help him, perhaps that the Lord had come in his chariot of fire. But who could tell? No one heard him.

CHAPTER XXIV

I

Among the Mounted Police and the Vigilants there was a white man wounded. And among the Levites there were many black men taken prisoner, and over three hundred black men killed and wounded. There was also a white man killed. The people who came from Gibeon in motor-cars to carry the wounded back with them to the hospital found a big black man in a red cloak with a puzzled look on his dead face, and beside him the body of the white man. The native doctor Tetyana was sitting beside them declaiming incoherently that something was not his fault.

It was Arnold Duerden himself who came, terribly moved, to tell Old Nathan about his son, but Old Nathan had heard already. Duerden explained how Saul had been found, and promised—he did not know what else to promise—that he should be buried with military honours.

He was not sure that Old Nathan heard him. He stood so still. But he said presently: "Thank you, Major Duerden. Excuse me," and left him. For the next week his shop remained shut, and men and women of his own community came to him, murmuring some condolence, and adding always: "I wish you long life."

At night Jews of Gibeon who were over thirteen years of age came to pray with him. They wore their

hats, and turned their faces to the East, and candles were alight in the room.

Old Nathan stood with them, and heard them muttering the traditional words of death: that the Lord might shelter the soul of the dead one in the shadow of his wings, and make them to know their end and the measure of their fleeting days. "Behold, thou hast made my days like handbreadths and my life is nothing before thee."

Old Nathan himself was not praying. He did not know to whom to pray or what to pray for. He thought to himself that the men here—good enough men—had probably other things in their minds than his sorrow, but yet they could afford, in an idle moment or so, to feel for him—who could not afford to feel for him now?

He remembered that he had always maintained he had his place in Gibeon as a village idiot has his place—people became used to things that were part of their surroundings. He now said to himself that he was pitied because pity was the loveliest thing to give away: it made such a patron of the donor, it cost him nothing, it put him in a position of superiority.

He wished the people would go, and yet he knew he would have resented it if they had not come. It was the custom of his race. It was his right that the Gibeon Jews should conform to it.

He stood among them with his pale, dry lips, and the green hollows in the shape of triangles beneath his cheek-bones, until they went away, saying, as they shook hands with him, that they wished him what he did not wish himself—long life.

2

He did not know what was going on in his mind all the time. Thoughts shot through his head, moved round and round his head, until he felt a kind of nausea.

One night he sat up suddenly in bed. A strange idea had come to him. He thought that, in the moment of his dying, Aaron had seen a bigger thing than that for which he had waited. He had looked for a God to come. And a man had come. Not in a holy passion for mankind—since it was not in humans to love one another; but in a terrible passion for duty—because it was in them to love what was right.

And here was the real triumph of humanity: that it had found a greater love than this rewarded love that could make a man lay down his life for his friend. Without hope, in bitter resentment, a man could lay down his life for one who was not his friend. These little mean and shabby beings, walking their precarious way to they knew not what, they had it in them to teach godliness even to God. . . .

But, as his exaltation had come to Old Nathan, so it departed. He flung out his arms with clenched fists, he rocked his body in futile agony. He had believed himself to be approaching holiness, he had but uncovered his secret heart. It was his most awful regret that it had been for black savages Saul had given his life. Not for his own. Not to help a great cause. But for those idle feasters on the hill, those watchers for the Lord.

When Tetyana came to see him the next day he lost

control of himself, as far as anyone in Gibeon had seen, for the first time. "Go, go," he cried to the Kaffir. "Go!"

A few days later Hermia arrived in Gibeon. Her eyes were pale in her pale face. She walked into Old Nathan's living-room and looked about its quietness while she waited for Old Nathan to come to her.

He came, and she held his hands and said: "Mr. Nathan. Mr. Nathan." He answered mechanically, as always, "Thank you."

They sat down, and she told him about herself and Saul and why she had left Gibeon.

He looked at her with his eyes that were bitter and wise, and yet innocent.

She wanted to explain so much to him, and found she had no words. And he, for his part, remembered the night Saul had come home with cut hands, but he could not talk of it, nor help her to say what she was trying to say. He had always been shy to discuss such things as affairs between men and women, and he was not, in that respect, changed now.

But he asked her presently if she intended remaining in Gibeon.

"No," she said.

"And your child?"

Hermia was silent.

"Have you seen her?"

"No."

"Are you not going to see her?"

Again Hermia said nothing.

"Mrs. Duerden," said Old Nathan, "go back to

your husband and child. Leave my son to me to remember. Go back, Mrs. Duerden."

He had not meant to say those words: "Leave my son to me to remember." But yet they represented a puritan jealousy in him. What right had this woman —with husband and child—to hold his son in her mind?

She flushed deeply, and stood up.

"Is that your advice to me, Mr. Nathan?"

"Yes, yes," he said, not looking at her, absently impatient. He wanted her to go.

She kept her eyes on him. He had risen with her, but he had ceased to think of her, she could see that.

Her heart was aching. She wanted something. She did not know what she wanted. She felt a terrible loneliness.

They neither of them moved.

Then she said:

"Mr. Nathan?"

Their eyes met again. He saw her now.

She held out her hand.

"I'm going home," she said.

3

The Jews had ceased now to come to Old Nathan's house, and he had opened his shop again. But he no longer stood outside, leaning against a post of the stoep, waiting for someone to whom he might talk. He sat on a chair behind his counter, he sold people such primitive things as they wanted to buy from him—not good things, he had never stocked any articles that were not inferior and cheap. Strange, he thought often,

the small business of his life, and the large sorrow in his heart.

At night he sat at the window of his living-room. It was very hot now—full summer-time, and his room was close, but he felt no inclination to go out and seek the little breezes in the night air. He just sat at his window, very quietly.

Sometimes he saw a man walking by, walking up and down past his house, and then going away. He thought it was Dr. Diethelm. Dr. Diethelm, he knew, had left the hospital. But he was not sure, and he could not give himself the trouble of finding out.

Even on Saturday afternoons, when he shut his shop, he did not go anywhere. But, as he did not choose to be seen at the window because people stopped to talk to him there, he sat at the table in the middle of the room, with a big book before him.

The big book, thought Dr. Diethelm, as he passed one Saturday afternoon, had probably something to do with world politics. Most of Old Nathan's books, he had noticed, had something to do with world conceptions. But at this moment Old Nathan was not reading. He was staring at the wall opposite.

It was on this wall, Dr. Diethelm remembered, the portrait of Saul had hung until his father, seeing his guest could not bear to look at it, had taken it away. And he remembered another thing: he remembered his own shameful sensation on hearing of the death of Saul Nathan. He had got a sort of awful contentment from it. It had made him feel that he was once again established in the world: other men's sons died too. Yes, he had always known that other men's sons died too, but his heart had refused to accept it. Now it

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was as though a rusty padlock within him had suddenly sprung open and given his pain release.

As he looked at Old Nathan he could not bear to think of that sensation. He walked slowly to the end of the street, his head down, staring, from beneath his jutting eyebrows with their protruding white hairs, staring unseeingly at the earth. Then he walked back again to Old Nathan's home, and up the steps of the little stoep. He knocked. There was no reply, and he knocked again. Then he opened the door quietly and walked in.

Old Nathan rose, and the two old men stood looking at one another.

Then Old Nathan, with a gesture, indicated a chair, and Dr. Diethelm sat down on it.

They remained so for several minutes. After a while Dr. Diethelm said something inaudible. He knew it was inaudible, cleared his throat, and repeated it.

"Perhaps you will play a game of chess?" he suggested.

Old Nathan answered him after a moment's hesitation.

"If you wish," he said.

He took out the board and the box of chessmen, and they set the pieces.

For another few minutes they both sat motionlessly staring at the men on the squares. They looked up and their eyes met.

Old Nathan removed a black pawn and a white pawn from the board, and held them behind his back: the white in one hand, the black in another.

He brought his closed hands forward.
Dr. Diethelm touched Old Nathan's left hand.
Old Nathan exhibited the pawn. It was white.
"You play," he said.

THE END

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